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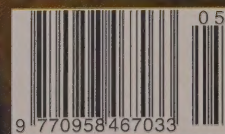
Mat Fraser

The naked truth

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May 2008

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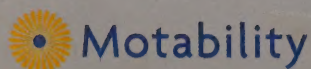
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EDITORIAL

Editor Ian Macrae ian.macrae@disabilitynow.org.uk

Deputy Editor John Pring Tel: 020 7619 7326;
john.pring@disabilitynow.org.uk

News Editor Katharine Quarmby Tel: 020 7619 7324;
katharine.quarmby@disabilitynow.org.uk

Design/Production Editor Jamie Trounce

Acting Sub Editor Stephen Games

Reporters Paul Carter Tel: 020 7619 7325;
paul.carter@disabilitynow.org.uk

Sunil Peck Tel: 020 7619 7321; sunil.peck@disabilitynow.org.uk

Elizabeth Choppin elizabeth.choppin@gmail.com

Editorial Assistant Kelly Mullan

ADVERTISING

Advertising Manager Patrick Durham-Matthews

Tel: 020 7619 7336;
patrick.durhammatthews@disabilitynow.org.uk

Advertising Assistant Suzan Hillman

MARKETING

Marketing Manager Fiona Mitchell

Tel: 18002 020 7619 7317; fiona.mitchell@disabilitynow.org.uk

ADDRESS

Disability Now, 6 Market Road, London N7 9PW
Editorial: 020 7619 7323; fax: 020 7619 7331;
textphone: 020 7619 7332; email: editor@disabilitynow.org.uk

SUBSCRIPTIONS

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Tel: 0845 120 7001 or email dns@servicehelpline.co.uk

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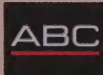
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editorial

First signs of revolt



Twice now contributors to this magazine have noted that the spectre of the demise of disability living allowance has reared its alarming head. It's arisen out of the government's on-going programme of change to social care budgets. The move is away from a system where central funds are given out to local authorities and other agencies who use it to provide care packages, to one where the money goes direct to disabled people who then use it to buy the care that's needed from the provider who's seen as giving the best deal.

For the most part, with one or two hefty caveats, this is seen as a good idea. But there is also concern that the government will use this opportunity to dismantle provision of a universal, albeit graduated, DLA and the money will go instead into the personal budgets pot.

As disabled people, we're

as likely as any other group to express concern at a possible loss of income, and to do so in justifiably panicked tones. But there's something broader. As they say, it's not the money, it's the principle. DLA came about after years of campaigning and in recognition of the fact that there is additional cost inherent in living with an impairment in a society which is not geared up for dealing with that impairment. To take a simple example, if public transport is not fully accessible or even, in some areas, is hardly there at all, people are obliged to own cars or take taxis.

The government has yet to come clean on whether this is part of its plan. In the meantime, it's hardly surprising that rumblings of discontent are beginning to be heard along with perhaps, even, the distant clatter of barricades being readied for action.

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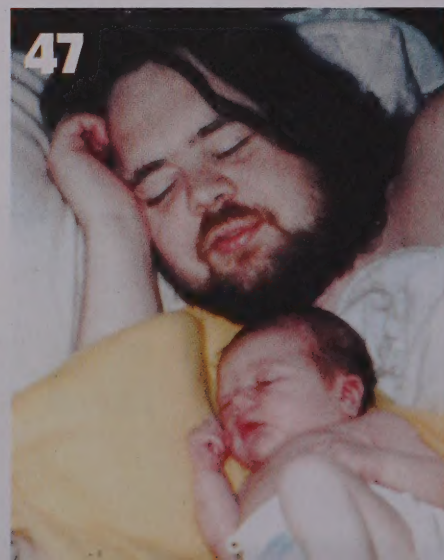
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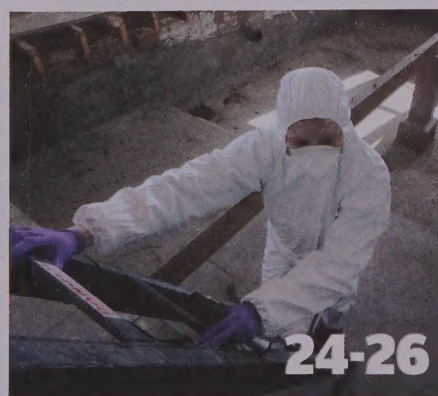
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Leading from the front

Sunil Peck

As might be expected, Sir Bert Massie, who was appointed as the government's new "Commissioner for the Compact" at the beginning of April, has wasted no time in galvanising the disability rights movement. In one of his first interviews since his appointment, he has told *Disability Now* that he wants user-led groups to be far more bold about seizing the campaigning initiative and contributing to the goal of independent living.

"You need to prove your case on your own grounds," he says. "It is no good saying, 'we empower disabled people,' and local authorities saying, 'we want to put them in a day centre.' We need to sell the fact that the issue is led by disabled people."

Sir Bert is clearly pleased with his new appointment, in which he will take responsibility for overseeing the government's relationship with voluntary and community organisations in the area of service provision. Phil Hope, the third sector minister, welcomed his appointment and said: "Sir



Sir Bert Massie and Phil Hope MP

Bert Massie has the passion, knowledge and experience to get the job done."

“There needs to be a recognition that voluntary organisations do not have vast armies of people”

Sir Bert, for his part, says that he has a big task on his hands in terms of educating government about the ways that third sector organisations function. It is unlikely that he will spare the government his trenchant views. Despite the fact that he says that he is still "getting his feet under the table", he says: "I know from my days as chief

executive of Radar that the way in which government responds to funding needs is extremely frustrating because of a lack of appreciation of how the third sector operates. At the moment, the relationship is not right and the Compact is not operating as effectively as it might do."

Sir Bert has worked in the voluntary sector for 40 years – most notably as the high-profile head of the Disability Rights Commission. He is also a commissioner at the DRC's successor, the Equality and Human Rights Commission, which he has criticised for its lack of attention to disability issues.

He expects to outline his plans for improving the relationship between the

statutory and third sectors later this summer. But some of the issues he will be addressing include how third sector organisations are run and funded and the resources they have at their disposal. He will look at the difficulties that charities have in competing for contracts against businesses – and at government consultation periods. Many disability organisations criticised the government for sneaking out its plans for the EHRC over last summer, for example.

Sir Bert says that the government must realise that smaller third sector organisations often struggle to comment on government papers and documents.

"There needs to be a recognition that voluntary organisations do not have vast armies of people. It is not helpful for government to publish a document in July and say you have to have the answer in September when most people are off in August."

Sir Bert concludes by saying that he wants the Compact to be "a living document that influences action".

breakingnews

GLAD all over

Liz Choppin

Questions have been raised about the pan-disability organisation Greater London Action on Disability (GLAD), which is still a registered company and awaits a £30,000 legacy despite not carrying out any disability-related work.

GLAD was thought to be defunct after a loss of core funding and investigations by the Department for Work and Pensions and the Metropolitan Police. GLAD acknowledged at the time that its own review had highlighted "a number of issues regarding governance, internal management and financial issues" (*Disability Now*, May 2005). A DWP

spokeswoman said that its investigation of "employees of GLAD who were claiming assistance under the access to work scheme" led to "overpayment recovery action" but that no criminal prosecution ensued.

Companies House and the Charity Commission have confirmed that the organisation is still on their books. Adrian Whyatt, current chair of GLAD, said the organisation's demise had been "grossly exaggerated", despite the fact that it is not holding meetings or functioning as a disability organisation.

Mr Whyatt confirmed that the organisation is awaiting the £30,000 legacy and will use it to pay off its debts, but

that decisions on how to use any remaining funds would be made at a later date. It is not clear how much money GLAD owes to creditors. Mr Whyatt revealed that the legacy would be paid into an account with one signatory, who sits on the board of trustees. GLAD is also entitled to 25 per cent of profits from any future sale of the building near London Bridge where it was based until 2005.

A number of prominent campaigners have concerns. Faryal Velmi, co-director of

London is in advanced stages of planning?"

Ruth Bashall, co-chair of the disability independent advisory group of the Met Police, wants more information on how the legacy will be spent.

Mr Whyatt admitted that GLAD is "semi-dormant" but said he feels that its existence would put pressure on the new London disability organisation and "push them in the direction we'd like them to go".

The new body is due to launch in early summer as a non profit-making social enterprise. London Councils has provided funding to secure new premises and start recruiting board members and a chief executive. The launch follows a consultation with 150 London user-led organisations.

“Why is a shell of an organisation being kept alive?”

Transport For All, said: "Why is a shell of an organisation being kept alive by a small group of people when a new pan-disability organisation in

Mayoral pledges

John Pring

London's Mayor has pledged to launch a programme to improve the accessibility of the capital's hotels and restaurants, in the run-up to the Olympics and Paralympics in 2012.

Ken Livingstone, the Labour candidate in this

month's mayoral election, made the promise in an interview with *Disability Now*, in which he said he would use new legal powers to force borough planning officers to meet his targets on accessible housing, and set up a new city-wide scheme to run the Taxicard and Dial-a-Ride transport services.

Brian Paddick, the Liberal Democrat candidate, spoke openly of his experience of depression as a senior Metropolitan Police officer.

He also said he would make it harder for taxi drivers to refuse to pick up Taxicard users and would improve Dial-a-Ride.

And he would carry out a "disability audit" of organisations under the Mayor's control to ensure none of them imposed barriers to employing

disabled people.

Conservative candidate Boris Johnson told *Disability Now* he would ensure that no bus left a depot without its ramp working and promised that his replacement for bendy buses would be accessible.

He also said he would recruit disabled people to City Hall posts, to provide "inspiration" to other disabled people.

• See pages 32-34



Her first steps: Neisha Webb, from Hartlepool, toddles around at 20 months - with a new prosthetic limb for her right leg.

Hate crime progress

Katharine Quarmby

The government has agreed to alter the British Crime Survey so that all respondents who have been assaulted will be asked whether the incident was aggravated by hate, and, if so, what sort.

In another development, all police forces across England, Wales and Northern Ireland are now required (from last month) to record data on disability

hate crime in the same way.

Superintendent Paul Giannasi, who advises on hate crime policy for the Home Office, said that while crimes against disabled people are often "rigorously investigated and skilfully prosecuted", "the hate element has not always been recorded. I also believe that disability hate crimes are significantly under-reported to the police."

Paralympic storm

Comedian Francesca Martinez has criticised British Paralympians for refusing to boycott the Beijing Paralympics in protest at China's actions in Tibet and Darfur.

Ms Martinez (*interviewed on page 15*), who pulled out of the Olympic torch relay last month, said: "Come on, folks, some things are more important than your own career. Before you are a Paralympian or an athlete, you are a human being."

Disabled and non-disabled athletes are coming under increasing pressure to boycott the opening ceremony of the Paralympics or even the games itself. The Chinese have also announced that they are planning a Paralympic torch relay that will visit London in the summer. But leading Paralympians refute any talk of a boycott.

London Marathon winner David Weir said that he would not boycott the Paralympics: "We've got a job to do. Whether it's the pollution or the weather or whatever, the Olympics and the Paralympics selected that country, and they must have known before they selected it."

Swimmer Sascha Kindred agreed, saying that the

controversy "doesn't really affect us, we're focused on what we have to do. The organisers have chosen China so we just have to do what we train for."

Shelly Woods, a wheelchair athlete, said: "I think all you can do is try and get to Beijing in the best shape you can and hope it'll be OK and that everything that's happening will sort itself out." Asked about the comments from Francesca Martinez, she added: "I'm aware of what's going on in Tibet but there's nothing I can personally do about it."

“Some things are more important than your own career”

Former Paralympian Dame Tanni-Grey Thompson said: "Every athlete has to make their own choice on this. For me, I believe competing is the best way to highlight the issues and move things on."

The British Paralympic Association said: "ParalympicsGB will not be boycotting the opening ceremony of the Beijing Paralympic Games. However, on an individual basis, athletes are free to choose whether they attend or not."

newsroundup



UN convention to come into force this month

The United Nations (UN) convention that aims to safeguard the human rights of disabled people around the world will come into effect on 3 May.

The convention was adopted by the UN's general assembly in December 2006 but it could not take effect until it had been ratified by 20 member states.

That hurdle was cleared when Ecuador became the 20th country to ratify the convention.

States that ratify the convention must enact laws to improve disability rights and abolish discriminatory legislation, customs and practices.

Britain has said it will ratify, but not until the end of 2008, prompting Baroness Jane

Campbell, chair of the Equality and Human Rights Commission's disability committee, to warn that the UK risked losing its status as a beacon for disability rights by delaying ratification.

The National Autistic Society marked World Autism Awareness Day by handing a petition to the minister for disabled people, Anne McGuire (*above left*), urging the government to ratify the convention.

Zoe Kakolyris (*above right*), who is profoundly deaf and has Asperger's syndrome, presented a picture she had painted to celebrate the day.

Scope expressed concern that the government would opt out of some articles, including the right to inclusive education.

Guidance to open doors to more hotels

More British hotels could be made accessible if new guidance is adopted.

The guidance*, published by BSI British Standards, the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) and the tourism agency VisitBritain, is designed to help large hotels and hotel chains operate under the Disability Discrimination Act.

The advice includes using keycards with tactile indicators instead of traditional keys; ensuring visually-impaired visitors can distinguish between hot and cold taps; offering a choice of cutlery and crockery; and developing an access strategy, with input from disabled people.

***PAS 88: Guidance on accessibility of large hotel premises and hotel chains**

New benefit rates to hit many claimants

Some disabled people could lose up to £400 a year under long-awaited benefit rates announced as part of the government's incapacity benefit (IB) reforms, campaigners claimed.

The Child Poverty Action Group said many claimants on disability living allowance will be penalised, mainly because of the lower amounts paid while being

assessed for the new employment and support allowance (ESA).

The new rates will apply to all new and repeat claimants from October.

Other disabled people will also lose out. Those found capable of work under the new system will be able to claim an ESA of £84.50 a week, while the equivalent benefit rate for those with low incomes under the existing system is £86.35.

Those found not capable of any work-related activity will receive at least £89.50 a week, with the poorest receiving £102.10 a week.

Commission to probe mental health trust

The Healthcare Commission launched an investigation into the way serious incidents are dealt with by a London mental health trust.

It followed concerns raised by relatives of service-users and the Mental Health Act Commission, which monitors the safety of people held under the Mental Health Act, about how West London Mental Health NHS Trust handles serious incidents, such as patients who self-harm.

The commission will look at the trust's responses to incidents after April 2005 and see if it took appropriate action to prevent such events recurring.

Government to close rights loophole

The government said it would tackle the abuse of disabled and older people placed in independent care homes by local authorities, by giving them protection under the Human Rights Act.

The act includes duties that protect a person's right to be treated with dignity and enjoy privacy and family life.

Last year, the Lords ruled that older and disabled people placed in independent care homes by councils were not covered by the act.

Social care minister Ivan Lewis said the government would look at how it could change the health and social care bill currently going through parliament, to reverse the consequences of the Lords ruling.

Communication services fail test

Services for children with communication impairments are "highly unsatisfactory" and a "low priority" for health and education providers, a new report said.

The interim report of a review of services in England for children and young people with speech, language and communications difficulties found that, despite some very good facilities, the system was "patchy".

Dyslexic recruit wins claim

A dyslexic police recruit hounded out of his force won claims of harassment and disability discrimination.

Probationary constable Owen Brooking (*right*), from Rochford, Essex, was "intelligent and articulate" but bullying superiors in Essex Police treated him as if he was "thick and stupid", a tribunal found.

They would rarely let him go on patrol and made him do endless paperwork.

Stratford Employment Tribunal found Mr Brooking had "no option" but to resign – in January 2006 – after three officers set out to humiliate and intimidate him.

Mr Brooking has since worked as a police community support officer.



TIM STEWART

It also found that early identification of difficulties was essential, services should be continuous from an early age and joint working between agencies and families was "critical".

Scope welcomed the report but called for ring-fenced funding, a statutory right to communication equipment and support and a need for a greater emphasis on alternative and augmentative communication in the next part of the review.

Leading activist denied flight access

A member of the government's disability advisory committee, Equality 2025, was refused permission to travel on an aircraft because she is a wheelchair-user.

Michelle Daley, who was on her way to attend a meeting of the group, was refused permission to travel on the Air France flight from London City airport to Belfast City.

Air France told her the booking agent had not provided accurate information about her access requirements.

Air France said that Scot Airways, which operates its flights between London City and Belfast, uses a small aircraft that cannot carry lift-on, lift-off passengers in wheelchairs.

Air France said correct procedures were followed, but that it was investigating the matter with the agent.

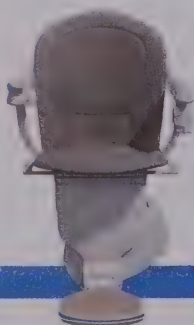
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campaigns

Asda fines slash bay abuse

After years of campaigning by *Disability Now* and other members of the Baywatch campaign, one major supermarket has started to fine bay abusers – and the results are startling, reports **John Pring**

Startling results from a new survey carried out by *Disability Now* seem to prove that fining abusers almost eradicates the misuse of accessible spaces in supermarket car parks.

Asda announced in January that it was introducing fines of £60 for vehicles parked in accessible bays without displaying blue badges.

Three months on, our small survey suggests that fining dramatically cuts abuse.

Disability Now's previous major Baywatch survey, carried out with Mobilise and the British Polio Fellowship last summer, found that Asda was one of the worst supermarkets for parking-bay abuse, with over 23 per cent of its accessible bays occupied by cars without a blue badge.

But our survey last month of three Asda car parks in London, all of which fine abusers, found that bay misuse had plummeted to just three per cent.

In the Colindale store, one out of ten bays contained a vehicle without a blue badge; in Southgate, one of 30 spaces was being abused; and in Charlton, there were



no offenders at all.

Helen Smith, director of policy and campaigns for Mobilise, said: "This is something we have been fighting for over the last seven years and we were always convinced that fining was the only way.

"We were really pleased that Asda took the leap and it has worked, just as we always thought it would. Let's hope the others take heed and follow Asda's lead."

Last month, Mobilise awarded Asda its annual Redex trophy for services to disabled people, because of its decision to introduce fining across the country.

Asda spokeswoman Rebecca Liburd said: "We are surprised and we are very happy that we have



JOHN PRING

taken the initiative to do it. We encourage other supermarkets to do the same thing we have."

She said a pilot project in Liverpool found that the availability of accessible spaces rose by 60 per cent after fining was introduced.

The fines act as a deterrent, she said, with only about one fine per store per week.

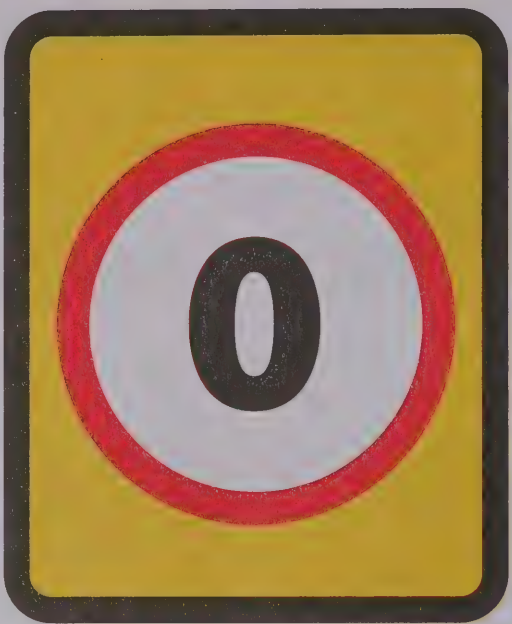
Asda-owned car parks fine abusers of accessible bays and mother and baby spaces £60 and split the proceeds between Motability and a children's charity.

Sylvia Noble (pictured above), from Edmonton, who uses the Southgate store (where abusers are fined £40), said she was in favour of fining. When she uses a Tesco store, "nine times out of ten there is someone parked next to us without a blue badge".

But a Tesco spokesman said they "favour the carrot, not the stick". "We don't believe introducing fines is the right solution for us as it can pose other challenges and we know from experience there can be occasional mitigating circumstances."

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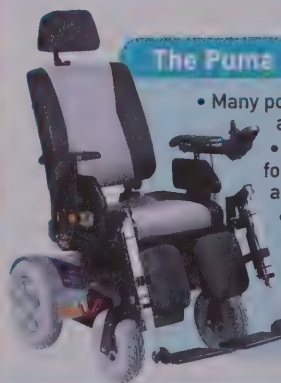
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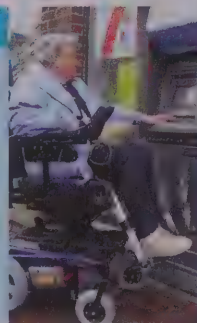
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politics

Standing up to China

Comedian Francesca Martinez tells **Sunil Peck** why she accepted the invitation to take part in London's Olympic torch relay – and then turned it down

Francesca Martinez has no regrets about her controversial decision to pull out of the Olympics torch relay through London in protest at China's treatment of Tibet.

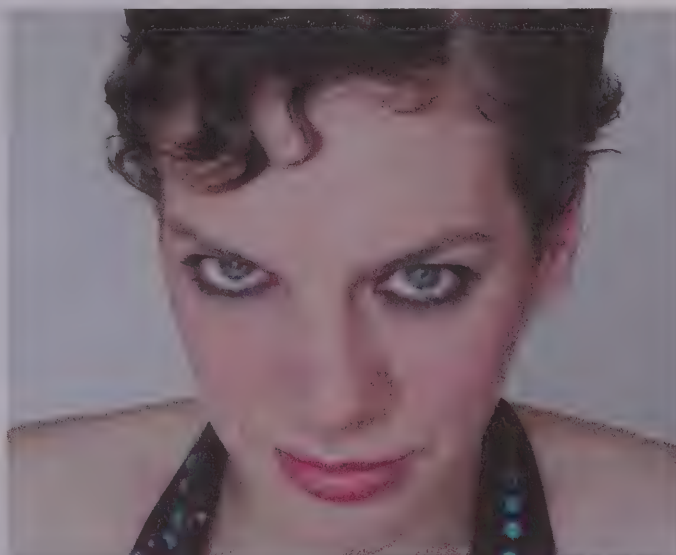
What's more, she is disappointed that Paralympians have failed to take a stand by boycotting the Paralympics in Beijing later this year.

"In my heart I say, 'come on folks, some things are more important than your own career.' Before you are a Paralympian or an athlete, you are a human being. If I were in Tibet in prison or being raped, I would hope that someone in a democratic country would use their free speech to speak up for me. The atrocities are a good

“I would either have to go on TV and not talk about the Tibet issue or pledge my full support”

reason to step back and say, 'can I help in any way?'"

But she concedes that it is much easier for her to



take a stand because she has not devoted her career to qualifying for the Paralympics.

She says she accepted the invitation to carry the torch for two reasons. One was that she felt proud to be asked to represent disabled people on an international stage. The second reason was that it gave her a platform to campaign against China's treatment of Tibet. But as the relay approached, she felt increasingly uneasy about the situation in Tibet.

"I originally wanted to see how the situation would pan out. I knew that China had been given the Olympics

on the condition that it improved its human rights record and I wanted to see if the international spotlight on China would help the Tibet situation. But the opposite happened and more atrocities seemed to be happening."

She decided to pull out of the parade in the back of a taxi on the way to an interview with Jon Snow on *Channel 4 News*.

"It became more and more clear that I would either

have to go on and not talk about the Tibet issue or pledge my full support and say that although I was honoured to represent the disabled community, the issue of human rights is also important – and there is also China's backward attitude towards disabled people."

There were professional reasons too and she risked jeopardising her personal integrity by participating.

"I am aware that, as a political comedian, my words can't be empty, otherwise I have no right to talk about anything. I can't express my support for Tibet and passionate support for human rights and also say, 'but I'm going to appear anyway.'"

Martinez hopes that her stance will encourage other people to campaign against human rights abuses around the world.

"It was a very small thing that I did; I was just one torch-bearer in one country. But social and political change in the history of humankind has come about through individuals standing up and fighting. I wanted to be someone who was supporting people who are fighting."

→ Have your say

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mediawatch

The road to unenlightenment

What's not entirely clear is whether, on at least one recent occasion, *The Guardian* – keeper of the nation's sense of proportion – lost the plot completely or was operating at a post-modern level beyond the ken of most ordinary mortals. Whichever, it left disabled people who contacted *Disability Now* gasping with mingled outrage and astonishment, and the paper itself came very close to disappearing up its own logical orifice.

Stewart Dakers' grittily real take on life comes from the estate on which he lives, hence the title of his column *Real Estate*. A recent piece featured Dave and Sue, a



couple with learning difficulties, and was headlined: "My dislike for this woman goes beyond her disability". The conclusion he appeared to reach was that in coming to recognise what seemed to be pretty intense dislike for Sue he was in some way acknowledging her as other than a disabled

person. Fair enough? Hmm!

The problem arose with how he reached this Damascene revelation. He described Dave and Sue as having "each cobbled together a life of sorts". He said how "ten years ago they'd have been called retards"; ten years ago, British Asian people were given equally offensive and objectionable sobriquets. Should a *Guardian* columnist use them in cold blood today? Fellow members of the club to which Dave and Sue belonged were referred to as "obese...and twisted...babblers and dribblers".

Dave and Sue went on to do the sorts of things

everyone aspires to and many do: get engaged, married, buy a house, have sex and a child. And that's when Dakers' dislike, and that of fellow estate residents, really manifested itself. Dakers quoted one reaction. "How come a couple of spastics can afford to buy what I can hardly afford to rent?" Dakers himself said that "it wasn't that they shouldn't marry each other, it was that they shouldn't marry at all".

Society Guardian editor Patrick Butler went on his blog to justify the piece, saying that it challenged attitudes towards disability on the estate and in Dakers himself. Since when did the reporting and presentation of naked prejudice represent a challenge to it?

Good news on screen

The Media Trust ITN and Mencap have got together with people with learning difficulties to produce a pilot news programme aimed at and partly made by members of the learning disabled community. The show, which aired on The Community Channel on 28 March, set out to present news in a more accessible way and to cover stories of particular interest and concern to its target audience. Andrew Lee,



Screen test: co-presenters Andrew Lee and Olivia Hill

director of People First (Self-Advocacy), co-presented the show with ITN journalist Olivia Hill. Lee told *Disability Now* the show

had been well received.

"The reaction I've had from people has been very good. It was well balanced and it was nice to see topics like

hate crime taken seriously."

But he emphasised that the show had a dual purpose.

"It was an opportunity to educate people from within. At the end of the process, people I was working with understood why learning disability was such a political issue. They said, 'we see you as the expert, come and teach us.'"

Further episodes of the show are yet to be commissioned but Lee is hopeful that consultation with viewers by Mencap will lead to future editions.

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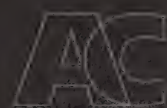
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disabilityrights

Ratify without reservation

Rodrigo Jiménez Sandoval was one of the key figures in securing a UN convention on disability rights. But he tells **Elizabeth Choppin** that the work is far from over

His name may not be instantly recognisable but for years Rodrigo Jiménez Sandoval (*right*) has been fighting for the rights of disabled people around the world.

In the 1980s, this disabled Costa Rican lawyer lobbied his government to pass anti-discrimination laws on disability, but arguably his most pivotal contribution was in writing and pushing through the Inter-American Convention on Disability in 1996 – a treaty that obliged signatories in Latin and Central America to uphold the rights of disabled people for the first time.

The treaty was presented to the United Nations and served as a blueprint for what became the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which, if ratified without reservation by member states, would legally bind governments to improve the quality of life of disabled people. In some developing countries, it could be the first time disability rights have ever been discussed.

Jiménez Sandoval says it

was the discrimination he faced as a thalidomide-impaired person in Costa Rica that first inspired him to act. He has lobbied on anti-discrimination law, been a university professor on human rights and advised countless organisations, including the UN, the World Bank and UNICEF.

The priority now, he tells *Disability Now*, is that the UN convention be ratified by dominant world powers so that rights such as inclusive education, independent living, quality healthcare and participation in cultural life can be reinforced, and in

A ratification from the UK would help secure the commitment of the rest of the world

some countries introduced, to disabled people.

He warns, though, that the convention will not change everything overnight. "The convention has been useful as a rallying point," he says, "but we're still just having a basic conversation about violation of human rights.



BOB KAUDERS PHOTOGRAPHY

All we have right now is a piece of paper."

States need to ratify the convention so implementation and monitoring can begin, he says. NGOs must watch closely and act when necessary. Disabled people should go on providing input and keep up the involvement they had in forming the convention.

"This is just another tool, an instrument, to secure our rights. Then it is up to us to use the legal system and courts where necessary." A ratification from the UK, with its "reputation for values and principles", would help secure the commitment of Commonwealth countries and the rest of the world.

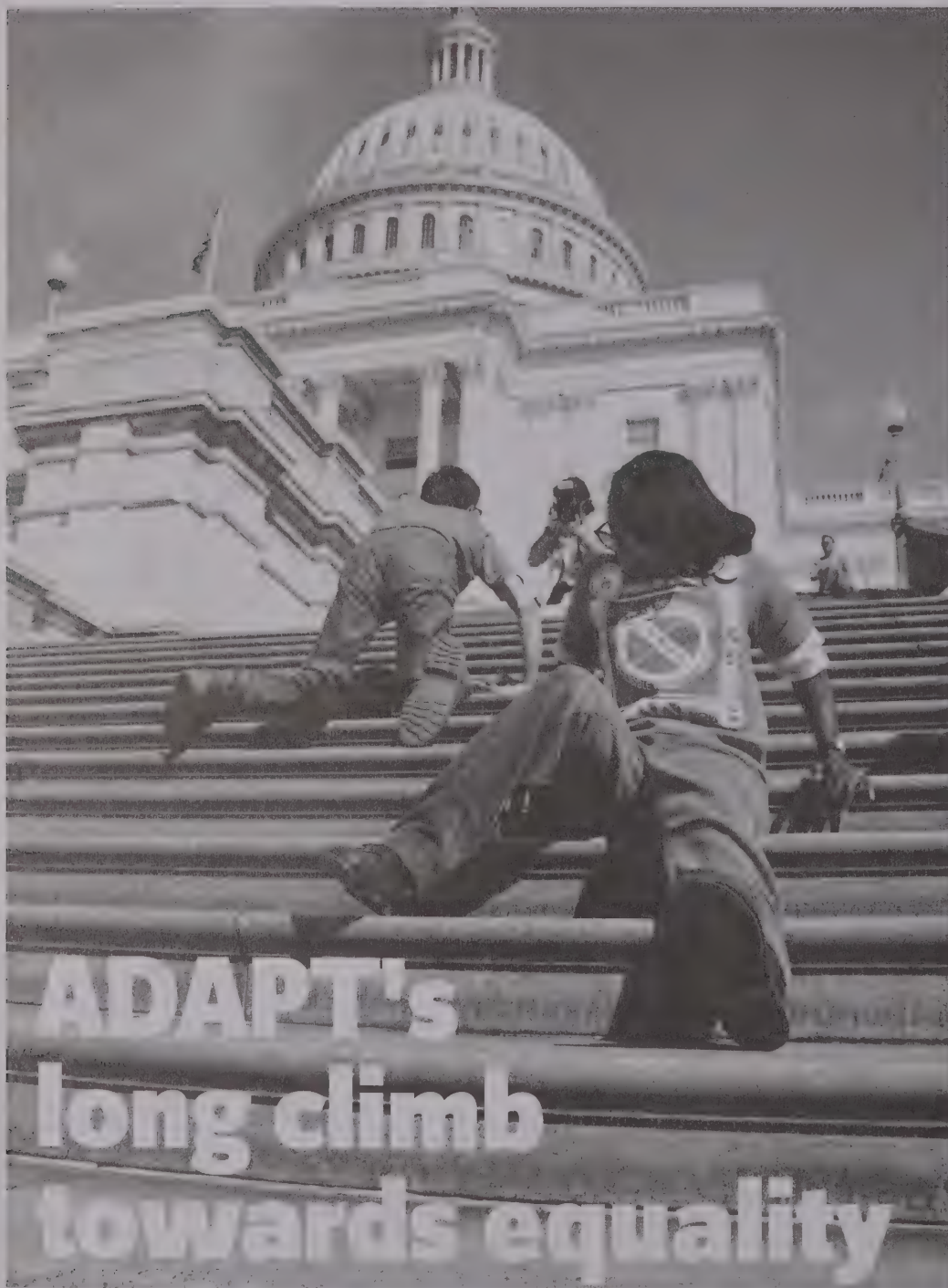
But there must not be

reservations (or opt-outs of parts of the convention), he insists, because they would undermine its aims. Disabled people and disability groups in the UK continue to lobby government for ratification without reservation.

Reservations have allowed some Arab states to sign the UN convention on women's rights, when clearly there are still violations of women's human rights in those same countries, he says.

But, Jiménez Sandoval is quick to point out, ratifying with reservation is better than not at all. "It's like a cake. Whole cake - without reservation; 75 per cent of the cake - with reservation. If you don't ratify, you don't have any cake."

worldview



Wade Blank was a non-disabled Presbyterian minister who

worked with Dr Martin Luther King on the civil rights struggle in the 1960s.

Burnt out as an activist in the 1970s, he found a job as youth worker/recruiter for a nursing home in Denver, Colorado.

The TV movie *When You Remember Me* depicts the horrendous abuse of young disabled people that took place and tells the story of how Wade (played by Kevin Spacey) helped 19 residents to break free, winning a lawsuit against the institution. This is where the film ends and the story of ADAPT begins.

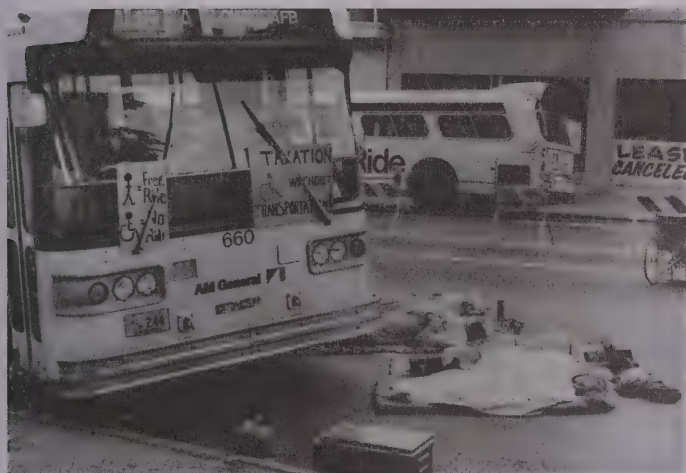
Wade at first provided personal assistance to all 19 disabled people but once the lawsuit was settled, he founded one of the first centres for independent living in Denver, the Atlantis Community, which still exists today.

The first barrier that the young escapees encountered was transport. Wade and the gang of 19 soon realised they would be housebound if public transport was not accessible.

On 5 July, 1978, Wade and 19 disabled people stepped off the sidewalk at Colfax and Broadway in the centre of Denver and trapped a bus for three days. Atlantis

On 1 May, the US campaigning organisation ADAPT celebrates its 25th birthday. Activist and singer-songwriter **Alan Holdsworth**, aka Johnny Crescendo, founder of the UK's Disabled People's Direct Action Network and an ADAPT member since 1993, describes ADAPT's huge influence on the rights movement

TOM OLIN



ELENA MARTIN/DENVER POST

Road to victory: the Denver bus access protest by the "gang of 19" in July, 1978

continued to campaign until 1983, when the bus company agreed to purchase only accessible vehicles.

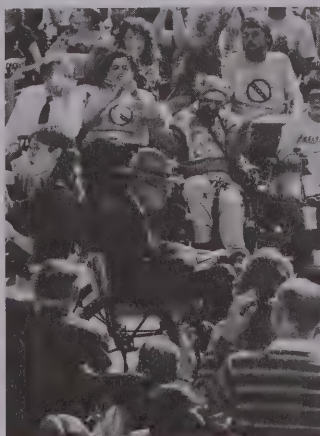
In 1983, ADAPT (the American Disabled for Accessible Public Transport) was born and staged its first national action in Denver, demanding that all disabled people could ride public transit.

The We Will Ride campaign lasted until 1990, winning victories throughout the USA and inspiring disabled people all over the world to use the tactics of non-violent civil disobedience to "boldly go where everyone else has been before". It inspired the birth in the UK of the Campaign for Accessible Transport and subsequently the Disabled People's Direct Action Network (DAN).

ADAPT played a crucial role in the passage of the Americans with Disabilities

Act 1990 (ADA), with disabled people crawling up the Capitol steps in Washington, DC, to ensure that the act was not watered down (pictured far left).

In 1990, with the ADA signed, ADAPT became the American Disabled for Attendant Programs Today, turning its energy to getting people out of nursing homes and supporting them



TOM OLIN

An ADAPT rally on the Americans with Disabilities Act in 1990

in the community. They also stopped people going into these institutions.

Over the last 18 years, ADAPT has been directly responsible for tens of thousands of disabled people getting out of nursing homes and living in the community. ADAPT fights for the services and the housing needed so that all disabled people can live where they choose, with who they choose, and direct the assistance they need themselves.

With its unceasing advocacy at local, state and national levels, ADAPT is indirectly responsible for hundreds of thousands of disabled people living in the community rather than institutions.

On Valentine's Day 2007, as a direct result of ADAPT's advocacy and action, the US government passed into law legislation called Money Follows the Person. This law means that a person can use the money it costs to keep them in an institution and transfer it to buy services supporting them to live in the community. This will set free many more disabled people.

ADAPT is now campaigning for the Community Choice Act, which would end the bias of institutional care over home and community-based services. Currently, states have to provide institutional care but home and

community-based services are optional. The act would force states to provide home and community-based services.

ADAPT's victories have made a significant difference to disabled people, particularly at the sharp end of abuse in institutions, but perhaps their biggest victory is the fact that they have grown from a gang of 19 to average more than 500 people at national actions, with thousands of members

The first barrier that the young escapees encountered was transport

and tens of thousands of supporters. They have also carried with them other organisations of disabled people in supporting their issues.

The hardest part of campaigning over a long period of time is being able to stay together and grow while keeping up the momentum. The UK movement could learn a lot from that. Happy birthday ADAPT and let's Free Our People!

• For a detailed history of ADAPT, visit www.adapt25.org
• To hear songs from Alan's new album, visit www.myspace.com/johnnycrescendo

onetowatch

Young hope

Eleven-year-old Jhon Bateman was one of the main speakers at the launch of Disability Lib, a lottery-funded initiative which aims to bring more power to disabled people's organisations. Could this early debut make him, like William Hague, a leader of the future? He tells *Disability Now* how he worries for our question compiler, how he hates being stared at and why he loved taking it to the top.

What's the best thing about being disabled?

I get to see things from a different perspective and get to face challenges that make me tougher than the average 11-year-old.

What makes you angry?

When people stop and stare, because you can't see my disability and I have to sometimes use a wheelchair.

What's the funniest thing anyone's ever said about your impairment?

There was a rumour circulating that there was no liquid in my bones (weird) and some people thought it didn't hurt me any more when I broke a bone because I was used to it (weirder).

How do you deal with people who barf on about your impairment? Have you any good put-downs?

I love it because it gives me the chance to turn it around. I ask if they are doctors! When people stare, I ask dad to "take me back to the home, dear".

What's the one thing that could be invented to make your life as a disabled person easier?

A machine that made equality or failing that a cool trike for 11-year-olds.

What did you most like about making your speech?

Knowing that I was taking it to the top, that people who mattered would hear it.

And what did you not like?

About a minute before, I got scared, but then I just went for it. That felt good. I would love to be able to do it again.



Young pretender: Jhon with disabled people's minister Anne McGuire

Who is your favourite disabled person ever?

Ade Adepitan, because he is so cool. He starred in *Beyond Boundaries* and pushed himself to the limits. I aspire to that.

Do you have any special or hidden talent apart from public speaking?

My hidden talent is streetdance. My instructor adapts the lessons to suit me. My party trick is being able to put my feet around my head and the wrong way round (you should see my mum's face).

If you didn't have your impairment which other one would you like to have?

I worry for the person who thought of this one. I am happy with my own, I guess.

→ Who do you think is One to Watch?

Send us your nominations for likely lads and lasses who could answer our 10 questions. They can be rising stars in any field of entertainment, business, the media or beyond

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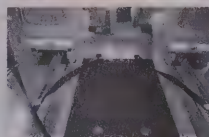
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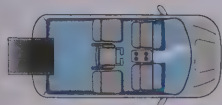


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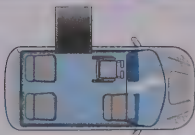
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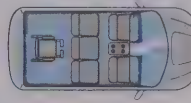
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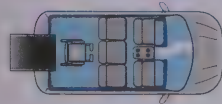
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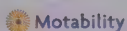


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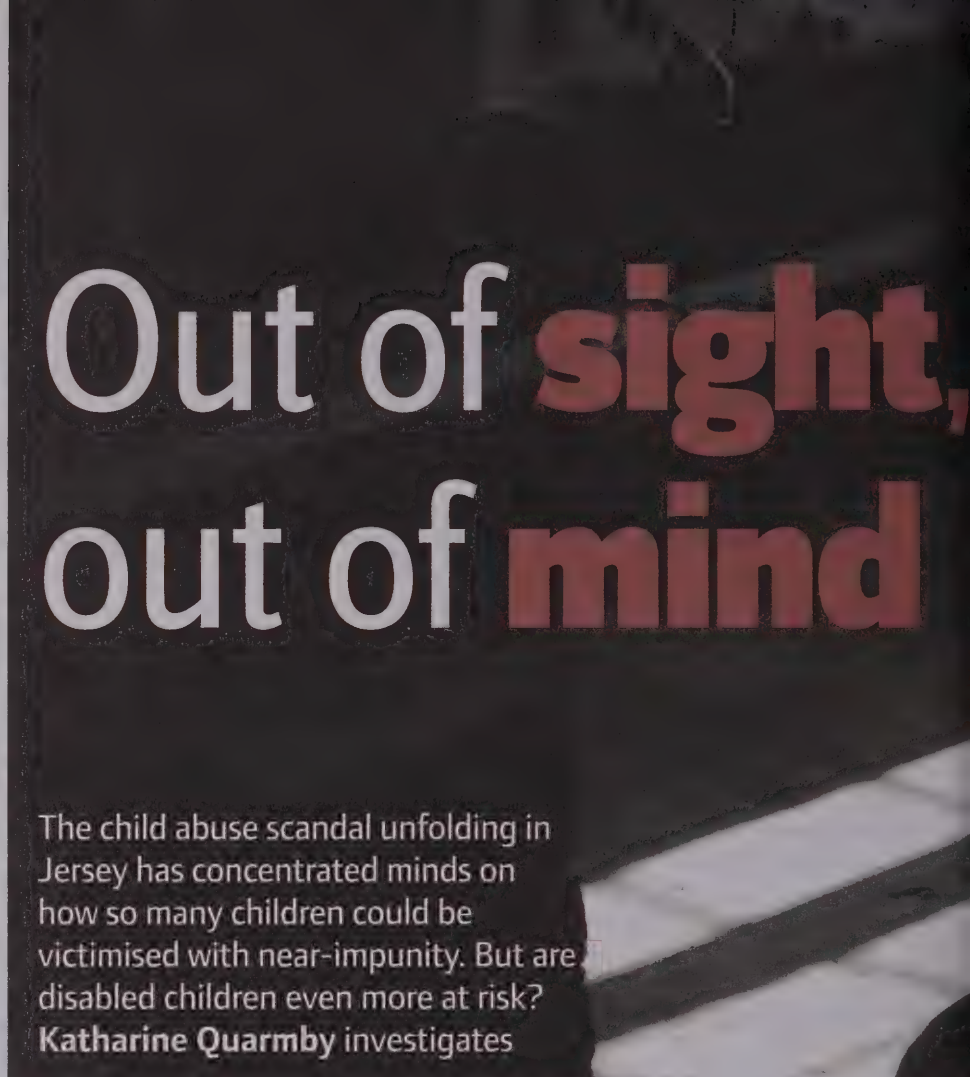
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As many as 160 alleged victims of child abuse have contacted Jersey police with tales of abuse in a number of care home settings on the island. It is almost certain that some of those abused are disabled, according to Senator Stuart Syvret, an island politician who has campaigned for years on child protection issues. An exhaustive review of the mental health services available to disabled children on the island, carried out by the charity YoungMinds in 2006, concluded, prophetically: "Jersey has been fortunate not to have experienced a tragic case leading to a high-level review that would delve in detail into services caring for children. The lack of robust governance arrangements would leave Jersey vulnerable to criticism should such a situation arise."

The fact that disabled children are far more likely to be abused than non-disabled children has not filtered through to public consciousness, although a number of studies have demonstrated an increased risk. A 2004 Norweigan report found that deaf women reported childhood sexual abuse twice as often as hearing women and deaf men three times more often. A large American study in 2000 found that disabled children were three times more likely to be abused. The NSPCC says that research in the UK has been "extremely limited" but what there is echoes those findings. Margaret Kennedy, who has been researching the abuse and neglect of disabled children for 20 years, has found a similar pattern. Professor Hilary Brown, an expert in child protection, says that the evidence suggests that disabled children face more risk of child abuse, are less likely to be believed if they do complain, are less likely to see their assailants face justice and are given far less help to recover from abuse.

Ms Kennedy has uncovered a number



Out of sight, out of mind

The child abuse scandal unfolding in Jersey has concentrated minds on how so many children could be victimised with near-impunity. But are disabled children even more at risk? Katharine Quarmby investigates

of horrifying cases. Michael Hill, a paedophile priest, abused nine children. Three were disabled. Another priest, Fr Neil Gallanagh, was given a six-month suspended sentence when he pleaded guilty to sexually abusing two deaf children at St John's Catholic School for the Deaf in Boston Spa between 1975 and 1980 – despite the fact that the Church knew of a previous sex offence conviction. Two other priests were convicted of abuse of children with learning difficulties at Thingwall Hall, in Merseyside. Asked why she thinks that so little attention is paid to such cases, she answers: "It's as if people think disabled children are from Mars." She adds: "I asked one senior official from a leading child protection charity what they were doing for disabled children facing abuse. She said, 'Margaret, let me deal with the normal children first.' It's as if people think that

disabled children are so damaged anyway that it doesn't matter."

Some cases are worryingly recent. Last year, news broke of Norfolk's biggest ever child cruelty scandal. Five members of staff at Banham Mills College, a special school, were charged with cruelty

“It's as if people think that disabled children are so damaged anyway that it doesn't matter”

and other offences stretching from 1979 to 2002. Many disabled victims came forward. Charles Jarman, a Hollywood stuntman, told of permanent damage to a broken hip after college head George Robson refused to let him walk with crutches because it would ruin a new floor. One child was forced to destroy his birthday toys and another was forced to



PA

eat regurgitated food. Two children were forced to fight each other. Robson was found guilty of child cruelty last year – and was sentenced to a two-year suspended sentence.

Craig Faunch and Ian Wathey, who were foster carers for Wakefield Metropolitan District Council, abused four boys between the ages of eight and 14 from 2003 onwards. Their victims included a teenager with Asperger's. During the trial, the defence barrister said that the teenager had the intellectual capacity of a seven-year-old, had a need for attention and "was displaying extremely sexualised behaviour even before he went to stay with these two" – focussing attention on the child's impairment, not on the abuse he endured.

In another case, a Gloucestershire foster carer, Eunice Spry, was convicted last year of multiple charges of child

abuse and cruelty towards three children over a 20-year period. One was a wheelchair-user, who came into care when she was recovering from an operation on a cleft palate, and the other two children were diagnosed as having ADHD. Although concerns about the children were expressed on 12 separate occasions, social services did not remove the children from her care.

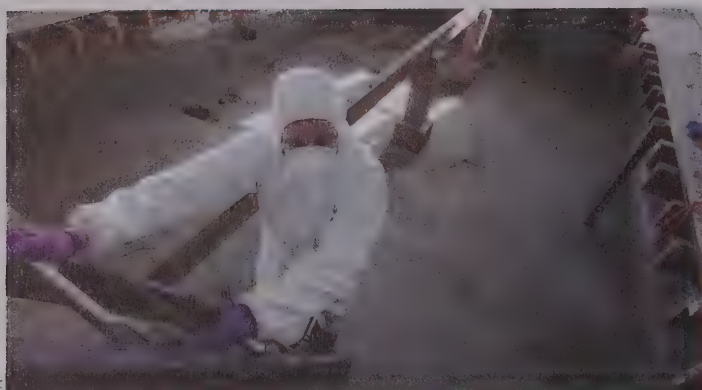
Disabled children remain at risk of being abused by unscrupulous, predatory adults because of the lack of safeguards. One pressing problem is that many live away from home in residential schools but do not have "looked-after" status. A number of charities have called for such children to have independent advocates, a call echoed by a recent report by the Commons children, schools and families committee. The government is considering such a move for disabled children. The National

Children's Bureau, which has led campaigning on the issue, says that if this right is not secured, the government "will be letting down thousands of the country's most vulnerable children".

Anne Patmore, a consultant who trains carers of disabled children, is concerned. "We place our most vulnerable children in situations where they are even more likely to be abused. A child with a complex mix of impairments will often be placed a long way from home. Social workers can't do a spot check, parents are less likely to turn up on spec."

Then there is the problem of grooming. Ms Patmore says: "If you were a paedophile, finding a child with a communication impairment would be very appealing... There is the barrier of disclosing, the barrier of people believing them, they are less likely to be seen as good witnesses, so the cases tend not to go to court." Margaret





The long shadow of child abuse: a forensic scientist investigates cellar two at Haut de la Garenne, Jersey

Kennedy adds that she suspects that predators are attempting to become foster carers as social services place more children in such care – an allegation strengthened by the cases above.

Very few cases of abuse of disabled children ever become public knowledge. Many disabled children, because of the nature of their impairment, receive personal care from a number of adults – and it can be difficult to distinguish between appropriate and non-appropriate behaviour. And many social workers, faced with the difficulty of finding carers for disabled children, don't want to believe abuse allegations. Reporting is also poor – local authorities do not have to note whether a child is disabled when they are placed on the child protection register.

So what should be done? Disabled children's rights organisations suggest the following steps. Firstly, parents should be supported to keep their children at home

– a statutory right to regulated short breaks would help. Secondly, disabled children placed away from home need independent advocates. Thirdly, care workers need better training in spotting abuse – a number of cases have highlighted that abuse has been confused with impairment-related issues. Fourthly, the criminal justice system has to champion the rights of disabled child victims to redress.

We approached the Department for Children, Schools and Families for a comment but none was forthcoming.

Margaret Kennedy says: "We are still catching up with the abuse of disabled children, which so many people think does not happen. They think that abuse is about sex and that disabled children wouldn't be targeted for that. But it's about power." Until society grapples with that uncomfortable fact, disabled children will be attacked with near-impunity. ■

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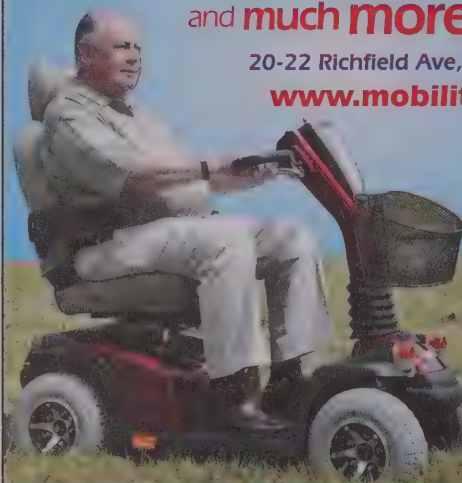
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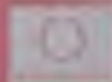
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The actor and writer Mat Fraser talks to **Paul Carter** about freak shows, performing in the nude and the 50th anniversary of the drug Thalidomide that caused his impairment

MICHAEL PRESTON/CREATIVET9.COM

Still loud, still proud

Mat Fraser remains one of the most recognisable disabled people in the UK today.

"Apparently, I'm like, 5th, he says. "I used to be 3rd. Still, we've all got to be yesterday's crip sometime!"

Despite the wry humour, Mat, now 46, shows little sign of fading quietly into obscurity.

In the next few months alone, alongside travelling to California to lecture students in disability at Berkeley University, he will be putting the finishing touches to his new play, *A Multitude of Elvii*, as well as working on a live art/theatre collaboration of

Beauty and The Beast with non-disabled performance artist Julie Atlas Muz, who he met while doing some burlesque in New York.

"It's quite a rude show. I'm nude for the entire thing," he says.

"I'm really into my Chinese horoscope and it said, 'this year, stop doing everything on your own, it'll be good to share and collaborate,' so I've also started writing a sitcom with Liz Carr that's so offensive that I doubt it will ever see the light of day."

Despite the fact that he's still clearly very busy on stage and in the arts field, Mat makes it clear that he would still like more roles on television.

So does he think that the representation of disabled people on screen has improved in recent times?

"Yeah, but it's still shit," he says. "It's getting better because there used to be nothing. Now there's something. I'm glad *All About Me* [the BBC sitcom] has been decommissioned."

"I guess it was good to have *Beyond Boundaries* on screen because any kind of disability visual presence on screen is better than none, but it wasn't quite the representation that I would be hoping for. Nothing against the participants, but it was a bit 'hero'. And I thought it verged on the pornographic at times when it delved into people coming to →

terms with their impairments.”

The conversation soon turns to the recent spate of shows on Channel 4 and Five such as *Extraordinary Bodies*.

“Please can we stop having the caring, sharing voiceover. Have: ‘Roll up! Come and see the Elephant Man!’ because that’s what’s going on. It’s revolting.

“Don’t get me wrong. As I get older, and less bristly and more mature and hopefully more accepting of other people’s points of view, sure, we do need to learn about people with extraordinary bodies. But only if that’s offset by seeing that many of us with extraordinary bodies have very normal lives. If it’s not offset with that then it’s rubbish.”

Mat is well placed to talk about freak shows, having done a lot of work with them over the past 10 years. This month, he is appearing at the Coney Island Superfreak Weekender, a freak show in which only the “born freaks” are allowed on stage.

“I’m fine with that, because I own the stage and I can control the relationship between me and the audience, albeit they’re only coming to look at my hands, but I think there is a two-way energy there and it can be a positive thing.

“I mean those people are pretty fucking stupid that come to that freak show. They really do need to know that it doesn’t hurt, and that I can wipe my arse and things like that, which I tell them, and they seem happy about that. Relieved almost.”

One subject on which Mat remains as vociferous as ever is the issue of Thalidomide. It is 50 years ago this year that the notorious drug was first licensed in the UK, and the campaign for adequate compensation for those affected goes on.

I ask how the ongoing portrayal of those affected by Thalidomide as



“victims” sits in the context of the social model.

He agrees that as a “proud, disabled person, proud to be different” there is a dichotomy between the two relationships.

I mean those people are pretty fucking stupid that come to that freak show. They really do need to know that it doesn't hurt

“All I can say is that the victim status that the Thalidomide Organisation are trying to push to get our profile higher to get us more compensation I think is legitimised because there are some people in really abject

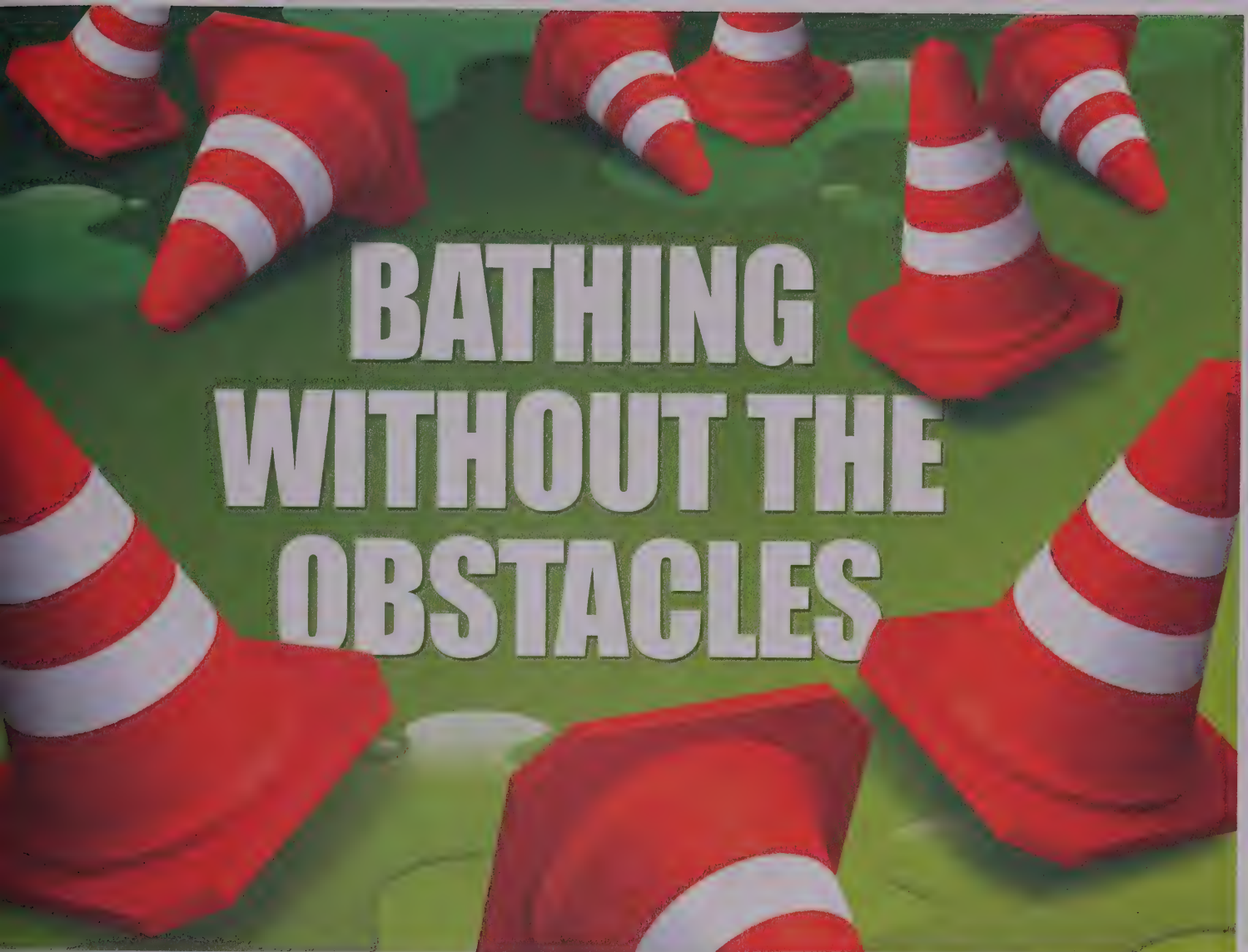
misery and poverty and pain.

“So on the one hand it does seem that the two are contrary beliefs, that they might cancel each other out, but I actually don’t think so. I think that it’s OK to use the victimhood. I don’t go, ‘look at me, look at my poor pathetic hands,’ but if they were hurting I’d go, ‘Ow! Look, man, this is hurting and it’s your fault, give me some money to make it better.’”

It is this relationship between campaigning and culture that Mat finally seems to be at ease with.

“I still think of myself as a disability rights activist, and I would always man the barricades should they be needed to be manned for the cause,” he says.

“But I still think it’s OK to flap my flippers occasionally. For a laugh.” ■



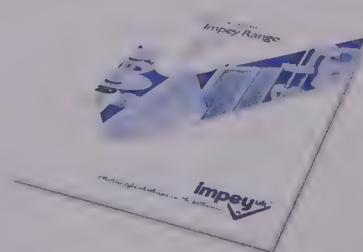
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London calling

This month's London Mayoral election has sparked huge public and media interest. **John Pring** interviewed all three leading candidates to ask them what they would do for disabled people

KEN LIVINGSTONE, LABOUR

He says he has the best record on disability issues of any elected official in Britain, so you would expect Ken Livingstone to have policies to address disablist hate crime and inaccessible facilities in central London.

But he says disabled people's organisations have not brought these issues to his attention.

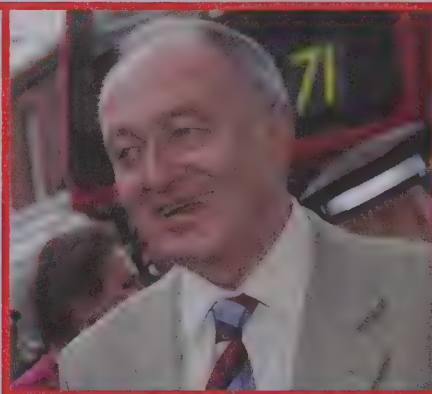
When we point out the lack of a London-wide organisation since the messy demise of Greater London Action on Disability in 2006, he promises to bring disabled people's groups together to set up a new body.

Unfortunately, it emerges that his own disability adviser, David Morris, has been closely involved in plans to do just that.

However, he also promises to launch a programme to address the shortage of accessible hotels and restaurants, in the run-up to the London Olympics and Paralympics in 2012.

As for policy priorities, he concentrates on two areas.

He will use new legal powers to force local council planning officers to meet the target in the London Plan – his planning strategy for London – for ten per cent of all new homes to be wheelchair-accessible or easily adaptable for wheelchair-users.



"Borough planning officers are missing it," he says, "they are not insisting on it. The new planning powers I have been given will give me the chance to step in and say, 'look, the boroughs aren't doing this and it is the law and we expect you to comply with it, and if you don't we are going to have you taken to court.'"

The government has given the Mayor money to build 50,000 affordable homes in London over three years, so at least ten per cent of these will be wheelchair-accessible and all will be built to lifetime homes standards of accessibility (another London Plan target). He says he also wants to consult with disabled people on how his London Plan will evolve.

His other policy priority, of course, is accessible transport. Livingstone has "finally given up" on waiting for the London boroughs to provide good Dial-a-Ride (the pre-booked, door-

to-door service) and Taxicard (which offers reduced taxi fares to people with mobility impairments) services.

Over the next year, he plans to fund one unified, London-wide scheme providing Dial-a-Ride and Taxicard services, to replace the "outrageous" postcard lottery that currently exists.

His focus is on door-to-door services and buses, he says, because about half of the city's tube stations are "physically incapable of being made fully accessible".

He says 15 per cent of tube stations are accessible, and in "spending a fortune we will get that to 25 per cent" by 2010. By 2012, that might rise to 30 per cent. But it costs tens of millions of pounds to make an "average" tube station accessible, with the bill rising to as much as £50 million for an older station.

He says disabled people should complain, as he does, if buses and taxis do not stop for them or claim their ramps are broken, although he says 95 per cent of bus ramps now work.

Of the three candidates, Livingstone clearly has the best track record on disability. He can prove it, too. The Greater London Council he led in the 1980s established the first disability unit in central or local government, and he is just as proud that disabled people took control of the unit in 1985.

BORIS JOHNSON, CONSERVATIVE

Disability, it seems, does not sit at the top of Boris Johnson's list of priorities.

When asked who he had been consulting with on his disability policies, he says: "With a wide range of relatives. Obviously, I've talked to various people. My team has talked to various people, but I am conscious that there is more I need to do to..."

But when asked who his team had spoken to, he says: "I, I, I can't say...I'm guided heavily by my mother."

There are also very few mentions of disabled people in the three policy documents I am given.

He is very good, as you would expect, on the agreeable generalities, but not so great on distinct, precise policies aimed at improving life for disabled people.

For instance, on accessible housing, he is short on specifics other than talking vaguely about new homes being "compliant" and ensuring that all new homes are "fully disabled-friendly" in the London Plan, a measure already in the current plan. And he wants to crack down on abuse of the blue badge, but only by "encouraging the boroughs and the police not to tolerate it".

On access in central London, he promises to "name and shame" those hotels and restaurants that are not accessible and says he "won't tolerate" taxi-drivers who refuse to pick up disabled passengers.

Asked for his disability policy priorities, he says he will ensure that no bus leaves a depot with a ramp that doesn't work and that he will support the Freedom Pass (he agrees with Ken Livingstone that its



RICHARD DAVIES

scope should be extended to provide 24/7 coverage to all older and disabled people).

He mentions a number of policies that could benefit disabled people as well as non-disabled people, but asked for other policies aimed

He is very good, as you would expect, on the agreeable generalities, but not so great on distinct, precise policies aimed at improving life for disabled people

specifically at disabled people, he first talks about encouraging bus drivers to stop pulling away "in a very jerky way".

He admits his tube spending priority is the "crisis" with track and signalling, rather than the "extremely expensive" process of making tube stations more accessible.

He intends to phase out the huge bendy buses, but promises that their replacements will be accessible and

says disabled people will benefit from having conductors on board.

Johnson admits that Livingstone has a good record on championing the rights of minorities, and says: "I certainly intend to build on that."

On disablist hate crime, he promises to support our campaign and as chair of the Metropolitan Police Authority "make sure we take disabled hate crime very, very seriously".

He says he wants an administration that "reflects all of London", and suggests recruiting disabled people to posts in City Hall so they can provide "inspiration" to other disabled people.

When we ask for one thing he could do to improve the lives of disabled people, there's a long pause. "You need somehow to change the way people look and think about disabled people and disability," he says.

When asked how he would do that as Mayor, he says it would be "by deeds, not words". But not, it seems, with a raft of policies aimed at improving life for disabled people.



BRIAN PADDICK, LIBERAL DEMOCRAT

He may not have as good a grasp of the issues as Ken Livingstone or as high a media profile as Boris Johnson, but when it comes to personal experience of discrimination, Brian Paddick is streets ahead.

In our interview, he talks of how his public disagreement with the commissioner of the Metropolitan Police led to him experiencing clinical depression.

His revelation came after a stilted start to our conversation. Asked to describe his disability policies, he talks vaguely of improving public transport and raising awareness.

But he slowly warms to the task, and can clearly speak about discrimination from a position of strength – as a gay man who came out while a senior serving police officer and someone who has personal experience of disability.

He calls for a “much more radical” target for introducing step-free access at tube stations, although he admits he does not have his own target. He says the Mayor should

have focused more on introducing step-free access at strategically important stations, rather than those that were easiest to adapt.

He also wants to make it harder for taxi-drivers to refuse to pick up Taxicard users, and a more reliable Dial-a-Ride service.

He also talks about improving accessible housing, although he is vague on how this would be done and says it is more about “providing leadership”.

Asked to describe his disability policies, he talks vaguely of improving public transport and raising awareness

He says he cannot think of a single one of his favourite restaurants that has a wheelchair-accessible toilet, something he says illustrates the injustice many disabled people face over access in London.

And he pledges to carry out a “disability audit” of every organisation under the Mayor’s control to ensure

none of them impose any barriers to employing disabled people, and again provide “leadership”.

Unsurprisingly, as a gay, former senior police officer, Paddick is good on disablist hate crime. He says the police – particularly lower-ranked officers – must take disabled people more seriously as witnesses and potential victims of crime, especially those with learning difficulties. And he says he would hold the force to account on disability hate crime as chair of the Metropolitan Police Authority.

As well as his own experience of clinical depression, he has been the victim of homophobic hate crime and domestic violence himself. “I have been very lucky in being able to experience these things,” he says, “and therefore to be able to understand the issues facing people, particularly people who are mental health service-users. People who are victimised because they are different.”

His mental health issues arose after his public difference of opinion with Sir Ian Blair, the commissioner of the Met, over the Stockwell shooting.

Paddick says he was desperate to cover up his depression – much of it work-related – because of the prejudice he expected to suffer at the hands of colleagues. “You didn’t want to acknowledge that the bastards had in fact ground you down,” he says.

“I might be short on the technical detail,” he admits finally, “but one thing I am not short of is commitment and passion around these issues.” ■

The other candidates standing in the election, on 1 May, are: Sian Berry, Green Party; Lindsey German, Left List; Matt O'Connor, English Democrats; Winston McKenzie, Independent; Alan Craig, Christian Choice; Gerard Batten, UK Independence Party; Richard Barnbrook, British National Party

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The great DLA swindle



Jim Elder-Woodward warns that the government's social care reforms could mean that disability living allowance is not as safe as we think

stigmatised social services and struggled to maintain their independence using their meagre DLA will now need to undergo a means-

fair to say that many of those who are penalised for using care services by having their DLA taken from them fail to meet their increased living costs and consequently live a more impoverished lifestyle. (This raises a question for those who, like myself, live under either the devolved governments of Wales or Scotland. In view of the Treasury's institutionalisation of the surreptitious local authority policy of using DLA for "care costs", do Welsh and Scottish politicians and officials agree with this shift of policy and responsibility to the local level? And where is the accountability between the UK welfare benefit system and the devolved

Local authorities and even the ILF

Government should keep its hands off our DLA

I read Jim Elder-Woodward's article (*Disability Now April, Disability Rights*) with alarm. Disabled people must vigorously fight a proposal for local authorities to carry out means-tested, community care assessments for benefits that replace disability living allowance (DLA) and attendance allowance (AA). These benefits were never intended for councils to use towards social care costs. Such a policy must never be allowed to happen.

Joan Wade, by email

Has this government gone absolutely barmy? Once a local authority takes over DLA it will disappear into the black hole of local

government and never be seen again. My husband and I rely on the DLA mobility allowance to keep our car on the road (we live in a rural area). Will we have to go through a "financial assessment" to get this money? I can guarantee we will not receive the same amount we get now. Will the money be ring-fenced and for how long? This government gave councils money to pay for carers to have an occasional break. This money was ring-fenced for a while. In our area it seems to have made little or no difference and one can only wonder where the money is being spent. The same thing will happen to DLA if local authorities take it over.

Glynise Dunn, by email

Life on incapacity benefit is no breeze

Labelled as a "scrounger", facing a restricted life, often in pain and fear, the road of disablement and the benefit system is not a breeze. Most people have had to fight, facing endless forms, degrading medicals, tribunals and benefit checks, while living in fear of losing their homes, coping with health problems and a lack of support from social services and doctors. This is hardly a "something for nothing culture". I am not opposed to working, despite physical limitations, and if it was so easy I would like nothing more than to get off the degrading benefits system. Sadly, there are real barriers into work this government is doing very little about. My local transport is not wheelchair-accessible and taxi fares to my nearest town are £12 one way. Three in four employers have not heard of access to work, and 70 per cent would not interview a person who has had mental illness. Working increases personal equipment wear and tear costs. And with private organisations to help people into work being paid by results, people could be pushed into unsuitable and low-paid work.

Karen Francis, Dorset, by email

Deaf people should be allowed to choose a Deaf embryo

It was with disappointment that I read your "Deaf embryo row" article (*Disability Now April, Breaking News*). No-one is asking to create Deaf embryos. Deaf people are merely asking for them not to be deliberately destroyed. As the disabled mother of a profoundly deaf son, I can see the difference between being disabled and being Deaf. My son is a very fulfilled and happy member of a linguistic minority. He doesn't see himself as having an impairment in the same way that I view myself.

Jill Medlock, Peterborough

System could not cope with 2.3million re-assessments

In Helen Smith's article on the vagaries of blue badge misuse (*Disability Now April, Road Test*), the methods of assessment past, present and future are called into question. Let us be realistic about this. The system is not geared up to re-assessing 2.3 million people within six months.

J G Dowse, Sutton-on-Sea, Lincolnshire

Winter fuel system is so unfair

I have just been reading your article about winter fuel payments (*Disability Now April, Campaigns*). Why do the over-60s get £200 (to rise to £250) and the over-80s get £300 (to rise to £400)? I am 47 years old and disabled, and when it gets damp and frosty I suffer from bad pain that stops me from doing a lot. All I get is

£10 as a Christmas bonus.
G Goodwillie,
Dartford, Kent

Seven years is too long to wait for food and fuel

I'll be 58 this year and have been looking forward to being 60 when I can finally receive the winter fuel grant. Imagine my horror and anger when I received a letter stating that everything is changing in 2010 and

people born after April 6, 1950, will have to wait until they are 65 to receive the state pension and winter fuel grant. So I will have to wait another seven years to decide whether I should have food on the table or warmth in my home. Why can't we, who receive the higher mobility allowance because we can't get around, get a small grant? Even £50 would help.

Carol Fox,
Stevenage, Herts

Shakespeare was right on language

At last someone expressing a similar view to mine on terminology (*Disability Now April, Up Close and Personal*). Betzy Valnes puts forward a very tolerant attitude to this old chestnut. Have we become over-sensitive and so politically correct that people no longer know how to address those of us who are "disabled" in one way or another? I admit that I am happier to associate my son with the term Down's syndrome, rather than mongoloid, but should I feel upset because I am often referred to as a diabetic rather than a person with diabetes? Of course not! We should be concentrating on the things that really change lives, like understanding, acceptance, tolerance and social inclusion. Unless people are being intentionally unkind in their choice of words, we should be relaxed about it. As Shakespeare said: "What's in a name?"

June Bebbington,
by email

Young people need to know more about sexual health

I would like to strongly support Alice Welbourn's timely comments (*Disability Now March, Guest Column*). Some of us who have worked with young people for years in sexual health have found it extremely frustrating in trying to address the lack of access young people have to proper education and information so they can make safe and informed decisions. I feel young disabled people are even more isolated and have less access to information on sexual health. When I have tried to contact disability organisations, it has been very difficult to get any idea of any education or information programmes.

Grindl Dockery,
Liverpool

Free passes discriminate against those who can't use buses



Pass it on: last month, the government launched a scheme entitling disabled and older people to free, off-peak bus travel anywhere in England

I have just been reading about the issuing of free national bus passes to people over 60 and disabled people. What happens to the thousands of us disabled people who can't access buses and have to rely on our cars? Surely this is discrimination. They could issue us with vouchers for

fuel to the same value as the passes. That may go some way to redressing the imbalance.

Denis Shaw, by email

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andy rickell



Make room at the top table

Setting up an Office for Disability Issues was the right thing to do, but to be really effective it needs a higher status, says **Andy Rickell**

I have only one complaint about the Office for Disability Issues (ODI): it should be given a much higher status within government. And I also have only one complaint about the Minister for Disabled People role: it should be a Cabinet post.

In my opinion, the minister and the ODI offer the right mechanism for promoting disabled people's rights within government; they just need the status and power to do so.

My ongoing reflection on the *Improving the Life Chances of Disabled People* report is one of increasing amazement that government can come up with something so potentially powerful and useful for disabled people. The report's writers clearly listened to the representatives of disabled people. The social model of disability, and independent living as defined by the disabled people's movement, have for the first time become government policy, even if we also recognise that government delivery is currently far from that reality.

The creation of an arm of

central government focused on disabled people's equality, what is now called the Office for Disability Issues (ODI), is necessary to ensure that somewhere in government, disabled people's equality is number one on the agenda (even more so with the demise of the Disability Rights Commission). And given its limited resources, it has a very sensible work plan.

I particularly like the concentration on getting good hard and soft evidence about the reality of disabled people's lives, so that progress towards equality can be measured and addressed. This idea of asking disabled people directly about their views and experiences is fundamental to an equality approach, both through direct surveys and through Equality 2025, the body of disabled people set up to advise government based on disabled people's input across the country.

However, if we believe that equality for disabled people will deliver improved life chances for the 11 million Britons who are

disabled, then the ODI should have the clout to match its mission. Currently it sits in the Department for Work and Pensions, implying that the government's main interest in disabled people is about the benefits bill and jobs.

As Gordon Brown correctly defined it, equality is about equal citizenship, about full participation in everything in life

But as Gordon Brown correctly defined it, equality is about equal citizenship, about full participation in everything in life. So the ODI should be at the heart of government. Westminster government struggles with this. I see only one radical solution: that the ODI should be a separate department, with a direct ministerial link to the top table: the Cabinet.

This sounds excessive. For instance, what about the representation of other disadvantaged groups too? Perhaps there should be a Department for Equality and Human Rights with a Cabinet minister, rather than the current ridiculously fragmented approach.

Whatever the solution for the representation of equality issues generally, 11 million disabled Britons who overall experience increasing poverty and are the biggest users of state support services, deserve their representation at the highest level in government. Only that way can the effectiveness of government policies as a whole be challenged by a minister responsible for doing so. Policies like welfare reform and "social care" should not escape an equality challenge in Cabinet.

• **Andy Rickell is an executive director at Scope: andy.rickell@scope.org.uk**

→ Have your say

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asktheexperts

you ask, they answer



Experts: Simon Parritt, Kate Sheehan, John Mandrak, Linda Clarke, Andy Wright, Ed Passant, Alan Barton and David Clarke

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Q With this purge going on again over incapacity benefit, am I still exempt from any reviews the government fetches in? When they changed me over from invalidity benefit onto incapacity benefit, there were overriding rules on invalidity benefit claimants.

Mr C H Potkin, Manchester

AB: From October 2008, incapacity benefit (IB) and income support (IS) on grounds of incapacity will be replaced by employment and support allowance (ESA) for new claimants. The government has said it plans to transfer existing recipients of IB and IS for incapacity onto ESA at some point, but there is no date for this. In the recent budget, the government announced that, from April 2010, it will start to assess all existing IB and IS recipients using the new work capability assessment (WCA), which will replace

the existing personal capability assessment (PCA). It will take about three years to give everyone

“I rely 100 per cent on deliveries for everything I need, such as medicine and food”

a WCA. The WCA is tougher than the PCA, and it is expected that about 10 per cent of people who would pass the PCA and stay on IB will fail the WCA. Those who do fail the WCA will be able to appeal. Otherwise they will have to claim jobseekers allowance and make themselves available for work. But there is no information yet on whether people in Mr Potkin's position will be required to undergo a WCA assessment.

Q I am a disabled person living alone in Haringey. I have no social worker and no living relatives or friends. I

am totally isolated and unable to leave my small house. The council has introduced new controlled parking restrictions which end near my house. I am now the first house where people can park outside, free of charge, without a permit. Since this restriction came in, there is never a space free outside my house. But I rely 100 per cent on deliveries for everything I need, such as medicine and food. My chiropodist visits every month and needs to park and so does the transport for my visits to hospital. Although I do not have a car, I have asked the council to provide a parking bay so people making deliveries can park there using my blue badge. First, the council said that anybody with a blue badge would be able to park there. This I entirely accept. Then they said they couldn't give me one because I do not have a relative who can take me out in a car. It is not my

fault that I do not have any living relatives. Is there anything I can do?

Baron Dombovsky, Haringey, London

LC: The way that parking bays relate to the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) can cause misconceptions. There is nothing in the DDA that requires local authorities to supply bays for visitors of disabled householders. Furthermore, public authorities are subject to DDA duties but only to the extent that the detriment caused to the disabled resident does not outweigh the benefit that the authority is trying to achieve for the public in general. For example, the location of bays for disabled drivers on highways maintained by the local authority can depend on how such bays might affect the use of the road by other road-users. On privately-maintained estate roads or parking areas of domestic

properties, some disabled householders confuse the DDA provisions relating to service-providers (to make premises accessible to their users) with the perceived duties of landlords to make their homes more accessible by providing

“Thomson's policy is to charge £6 for passengers who wish to be seated together”

designated disabled parking bays. This is seeking preferential treatment for a reason related to their disability and is unlikely to be enforceable under the DDA.

Q We recently organised a trip to Tenerife and booked a Thomson flight from Bournemouth. Among the various charges added to our flight price was £6 per person for sitting together – making an added total of £24 for the return trip. I have complained to the company as my husband is disabled and I am his carer.

If I had not paid this additional fee, would we have been seated separately? I have asked Thomson if they were prepared to provide a carer to sit next to my husband and so far they have not replied to my letter.

Marie Crawford, by email

AW: The charge applied by Thomson to both you and your husband for wishing to sit together is, in my opinion, incorrect. Yes, it is Thomson's policy to apply a charge of £6 per person for those passengers who wish to be guaranteed seats together. However, the agent booking the flight on your behalf should then contact the special needs department within Thomson in order to identify that one of the passengers is disabled, and hence will require help on the aircraft, whereupon Thomson should not apply this charge. I appreciate that, at the time of writing your letter, you had not had a reply from Thomson, but I am hoping that by now, they will have recognized the error and refunded your money.

→ If you have a question for our panel

- phone us 020 7619 7323
- write to us Disability Now, 6 Market Road, London N7 9PW
- email us editor@disabilitynow.org.uk

RELATIONSHIPS

SIMON PARRITT

Simon is a chartered counselling psychologist who has also studied psychosexual therapy. He was the only disabled director of the former Association to Aid the Sexual and Personal Relationships of People with a Disability (SPOD).

FINANCE

DAVID CLARKE

David has spent 14 years in banking and has worked for three leading financial service providers. He is a senior partner with Clydesdale Bank.

PROPERTY

KATE SHEEHAN

Kate is a director of Better Living and an occupational therapist with 20 years' experience and a passionate interest in housing. Better Living works with manufacturers to meet the needs of the ageing population.

LEGAL & BENEFITS

LINDA CLARKE

Linda is director of Disability Law Service (DLS). DLS is the only service controlled and managed by disabled people that offers free legal advice to disabled people, families and carers.

EQUIPMENT

JOHN MANDRAK

John, who is blind, has worked for nearly 25 years as a disability journalist and consultant. He is an adviser on the Disabled Living Foundation's helpline.

TRAVEL

ANDY WRIGHT

Andy is a disabled travel industry professional with over 25 years' experience and is managing director of Accessible Travel, a specialist tour operator providing holidays for people with mobility impairments.

MOTORING

ED PASSANT

Ed is chief executive of the Forum of Mobility Centres. The centres provide driver and passenger assessment for disabled people across the UK.

MONEY, LEGAL & BENEFITS

ALAN BARTON

Alan is a social policy adviser for Citizens Advice, and an adviser at Rickmansworth Citizens Advice Bureau. He has a particular interest in benefits issues.

backchat

Mayoral candidates vote for social model



The highlight of Backchat's month (sad as this will no doubt sound) was hearing the reactions of the three London Mayoral candidates when asked to define the social model of disability.

Backchat had predicted that the current Mayor, Ken Livingstone, would pass this particular test with flying colours. After all,

he claims to have the best record on disability issues of any elected official in the country.

But no. He was stumped. "Can you explain what you mean by the question?" he said. "I don't understand the question."

Boris Johnson's mildly-stunned and slightly-wounded grimace would be familiar to viewers of *Have I*

Got News For You.

Brian Paddick emitted an exasperated grunt. Following a brief pause, he said: "Give me a clue. I have discussed it before but I can't think of it at the moment."

Much more positive were their reactions when the social model was explained to them.

"That's pretty obvious," said Ken. Society, he said, was under a duty to remove the barriers that prevent disabled people making a bigger contribution.

Brian said it was "clearly

a much more positive way of looking at things" and "quite rightly puts the responsibility on society rather than the disabled person".

Boris, meanwhile, almost exploded with enthusiasm. "Go on..." he said. "I see exactly what you're talking about...yes, that's absolutely right."

Blimey. Have we really come so far that our leading politicians have the social model running through them, as if they were sticks of rock, even if they don't realise it?

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guestcolumn

Why it's still not safe to come out

It will take more than a change in the law to stop care providers discriminating on the grounds of sexuality, says **Ju Gosling**

As disabled people, we all know that it takes more than a change in the law to change our daily experiences. While we have all enjoyed some legal protection against discrimination for over a decade, disabled lesbians, gay men and bisexuals have only had the right not to be discriminated against by service-providers on the grounds of sexual orientation for less than a year. And unsurprisingly, there is still a long way to go before this "right" becomes reality.

A survey by the Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI) suggested in March that nearly half of all disabled bisexuals, lesbians and gay men who use social care have faced discrimination by their service providers. As a result, fewer than 40 per cent felt comfortable enough to "come out" about their sexuality in their last review.

What does this discrimination look like? It

might mean being denied services altogether because the person in charge of the review doesn't think "queers" are "deserving" enough. It might mean experiencing subtle – or not so subtle – abuse in your home on a daily basis. It might mean living life in "the closet" without being able to be yourself and without contact with your community.

Discrimination can mean a gay man being housed in a project for disabled women

It might mean a care home manager telling you that if you disclose your sexual orientation to staff or residents, you will be asked to leave. It might mean being told you can't have your same-sex partner to stay overnight in supported accommodation, even though heterosexual partners are welcome. It might mean personal assistants being allowed to refuse to work with you and telling other



DOMINIC HARRIS

service-users why.

It might mean a gay man being housed in a project for disabled women, perhaps because gay men are seen as sex offenders and a danger to other men, or feminised and not "real men" at all.

Thank goodness for CSCI, which has produced comprehensive advice for care-providers in response to the new legislation. *Providing appropriate services for lesbian, gay and bisexual and transgender people* is the first in a series of three bulletins designed to help service providers address the "personalisation" agenda in social care.

CSCI is particularly to be congratulated for covering

transgender issues, despite this group not yet having legal rights and facing more discrimination than lesbians, gay men and bisexuals.

Despite being screamingly out to the world at large, when it comes to dealing with social care services I am still in the majority who do not feel safe to "out" themselves. I long for the day when this is no longer the case, and I am very appreciative of CSCI's current efforts to achieve change, but I am absolutely not holding my breath.

• **Ju Gosling is an artist, writer and activist, and co-chairs Regard, the national lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender disabled people's body**

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Don't **lose** your bottle

Johny Cassidy was met by tuts and prejudice as his daughter's main carer

I think it was Winston Churchill who said that when war begins, throw away the battle plans. That's what it was like for my partner Angela and me when my first daughter, Oonagh, was born in 2001. It was incredible to think how much disruption a seven-pound little human being could bring, but bring it she did.

Three months into the campaign, we agreed Angela would go back to work. It seemed the sensible thing to do. This meant I would look after Oonagh during the day. How difficult could it be? Poor naïve me.

I soon found that nappies and the inability to see don't mix and at first found it easier just to bath Oonagh when she needed changing. This way I knew she was clean. Just whip the nappy off, a quick dunk in the tub and job done.

Looking back, Oonagh must have been the most bathed baby ever. After the regular mealtime foodfight, where I would put food up her nose and in her ears, she would get dunked again. The mashed carrots, or whatever culinary delight I had created, would vanish down



the plughole and I'd have a nice clean baby again. For about two minutes.

— Before I could locate her mouth with my little finger, I had the bottle snatched from me and put in her mouth by someone else

I really loved my time with Oonagh (pictured above with the author) and took to it quite well but what I found odd was people's reactions to a blind man looking after his daughter.

Everyone had an opinion, from health visitors to friends and neighbours. This was my biggest barrier. Nappies I learnt to change; prejudices and ideas about childcare I did not.

I realise that social services and health visitors have a responsibility to see children are looked after. I think this is why Angela and I had more health checks than our friends. At the time they laughed at the preferential treatment we were getting because of my eyesight but I think it was mainly to monitor how I was doing as the main carer.

Public attitudes were interesting, especially among older people. I remember being in a shop when Oonagh was about six months old. She had been asleep in her buggy but woke up quite grizzly and hungry. I knew she wanted her bottle so she could go back to sleep again but before I was able to locate her mouth with my little finger, I had the bottle snatched from me and put in her mouth by someone else. On another occasion, a friend's daughter's christening, I had to contend not only with tuts and comments but the suggestion that I should join the men at the bar, as if my tending a child made me inadequate as a man and my being blind made me unfit as a father. I was told that I was holding Oonagh wrongly and that she needed winding or changing. When I did change her, I felt incredibly smug that there were no signs of nappy rash but it was hard to keep calm as my nappy-changing skills were publicly scrutinised.

In spite of these upsets the good definitely outweighed the bad. It was a massive learning curve for us all and we all gained. Oonagh is six now and there's no doubt we have a special bond. My white stick has been every sort of toy from a horsey to a magic wand. Maybe some day she can use it to change the world, if she hasn't already.

Looking good,



First impressions can be crucial, particularly at job interviews. So volunteers from the charity, fashion and beauty sectors came together for a style advice session for six visually-impaired women. **Linn Martinussen** reports

It was time to leave the house, but I had to check one final time if I looked OK.

I was on the way to an event that was going to be offering me and five other visually-impaired women advice on their clothes, make-up and general sense of style to help them feel more confident as they looked for jobs.

I was looking forward to hearing how I could improve my own look, but also nervous about how the experts would judge my current style.

The event was organised by Patsy Neal, from the consultancy firm Acumen Solutions UK, and Hetal Bapodra, who is blind, with the backing of the charity Blind in Business.

I asked Hetal where the idea for the event had come from. "When I know I look good," she said, "I feel like I have the confidence to take on the world, and I believe every woman has the right to feel like that, especially in interview situations and the workplace, where it is the most important.

"There was no-one doing this sort of thing and...whether we like it or not, people do judge on first impressions."

Other organisations involved were the charity Dress for Success, which helps low-income women in London



Beauty show: from left, Payal Shah (from Morgan Stanley), Dipti Bhadresa, Hetal Bapodra, Alisa Stoker and Angela Tresise (Morgan Stanley)

When I know I look good, I feel like I have the confidence to take on the world, and I believe every woman has the right to feel like that

find the right clothes for job interviews; T M Lewin, which makes business clothes; and Gina Conway Aveda, the London hair and beauty salons.

Each of us six women was paired

with a volunteer from the financial services company Morgan Stanley, who were their guides and wrote down all the tips on clothes and make-up. These women, who were all professionals themselves, also passed on invaluable advice during the day.

"This is just going to be fun," Hetal told us at the start of the day. "Look at this like a girly party without the wine, pizza or Chinese takeaway."

We were split into two groups, one dealing with clothes and one dealing with hair and make-up.

Ann, a lovely New York girl from

feeling great



PATSY NEAL

Pictured, clockwise from top left: Payal Shah, Dipti Bhadresa and (back) Phoenix Naidoo (Gina Conway Aveda); Sara Brice (Morgan Stanley) and Malini Shah; Sehr Aziz (Morgan Stanley) and Caroline Collyer; goody bags provided by Acumen and Mr and Mrs Bapodra; Fiona Vander and Claire Dumontier (both T M Lewin); and Angela Tresise, Linn Martinussen and Elaine Wong (T M Lewin)

Dress for Success, asked me to describe my current style and how I would like to look.

I told her that, at work, I tried to go for a look which was both professional and sexy, and one that I could also wear if I wanted to go out in the evening.

"I can see that in what you're wearing," said Ann. "You're wearing clothes that compliment your figure and you could wear them out to dinner as well as in the office."

We talked about how I could expand my work wardrobe with a few different skirts and trousers, and the kind of tops I could wear to make me look original as well as smart and professional.

"An A-line black or grey skirt just above your knees would be perfect for you," said Ann.

"Yes, and it would look feminine," said Angela, my volunteer. "If you wear that with shirts and tops in different colours, and combine it with a dark suit jacket, it would be perfect. You could even wear a dress in combination with a suit jacket."

After agreeing to go shopping with Ann, admiring some women's suits from T M Lewin, and discovering that, really, I didn't need to change my style at all, I felt good.

It was now time for make-up, the area I felt most insecure about. I tint my eye-lashes and have been told my complexion is good, so I tend to avoid lots of make-up. It just confuses me. Everyone I know seems to put it on



differently and I don't know which way's right for me.

I chatted with Pheonix about my make-up. I told her I was using Clean and Clear from Boots, and how I did my make-up.

"Instead of pink eye-shadow and blush, which you say you tend to go for, I want to try some tinted moisturiser and some bronze brown eye make-up," Phoenix said, and started gently cleaning my face.

As she put the make-up on, Phoenix explained exactly how she did it and what she was putting on, while Angela wrote everything down for me. I also had a go at putting on my own make-up and I was told that, if I stuck to what I'd learned today, I would always look fine when I went out.

The day was drawing to a close. I



Flower power: Hetal Bapodra and Pauline Murphy from Dress for Success

had bought some Aveda products, and been given a free goody bag of cosmetic products. Everyone seemed to have had a good day.

There are now plans for a follow-up event in September*.

On the tube home that afternoon I felt good, not only about my new look,

but about the fact that Ann was going to take me shopping soon. I'm starting work in a few weeks and what better excuse do I need to expand my wardrobe. ■

***Anyone interested in attending the next event can email Patsy Neal at pneal@acumensolutions.com**

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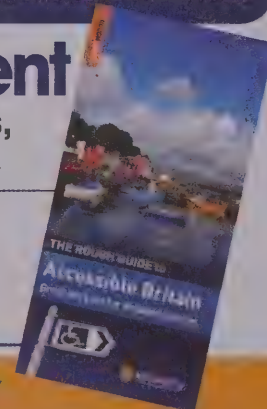
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localknowledge

Transports of gloom

An exhibition by a Glasgow museum is shining a light on the transport problems faced by disabled people. **Elizabeth Choppin** reports

Disabled people are under-represented in countless places, not least in the exhibits of the UK's major cultural institutions.

But a project from the Department of Museum Studies at the University of Leicester has rallied nine museums and galleries in Scotland and England to stage shows that feature experiences, images, objects and film related to disabled people and their lives.

*Rethinking Disability Representation**, funded by the National Endowment for Science, Technology and the Arts and the Heritage Lottery Fund, aims to take the lead in turning "elitist and unwelcoming" museums into "vibrant cultural centres that promote positive social change".

The idea of the £500,000 project, involving a "think-tank" of disabled people that included Rachel Hurst, director of Disability Awareness in Action, is to challenge disablism by showing how disability affects people's lives.

One such exhibition – *Lives in Motion***, hosted by the



Museum of Transport in Glasgow – focuses on the difficulties faced by disabled people in their daily journeys.

Among the exhibits are podcasts by BBC journalist Ian Hamilton. Mr Hamilton is blind and, like countless other disabled people, doesn't find public transport easy to navigate. When jostled on the bus by careless passengers, it can be more like "extreme sport" than anything else – not that anyone would notice, he says.

Alongside Mr Hamilton's podcasts is *Our Journey*, a photographic essay that

follows wheelchair-user Peggy Boyle (above) as she tries to manoeuvre round Glasgow by train and bus.

"It's not easy," says Mrs Boyle. "If you make up your mind you want to go somewhere, sometimes you just can't go. There are a lot of us that need things improved and something should be done about it."

During her journey, Mrs

Boyle faced unmanned stations, cobbled ground and inaccessible platforms. "Some days it's terrible for wheelchair-users," she says.

Jackie Shields, who accompanied Mrs Boyle, agrees that the journey was not as easy as it should be. Many inaccessible buses passed them by and, more often than not, they had difficulty in getting where they wished to go.

The main thing, says John Ferry, education curator for Glasgow Museums, is that the exhibition helps to open the eyes of the general population.

"The more society is aware of the problems disabled people face, the better," says Ferry. "There are so many more changes that need to be made in terms of transport, issues faced in cities all over the UK. An exhibition like this helps to raise awareness about that."

***For more information, tel: 0116 252 3963 or visit www.le.ac.uk/ms/research/pub1129.html**

*****Lives in Motion* ends on 31 October. For more information, tel: 0141 287 2720 or visit www.glasgowmuseums.com**

CONTACT US

Do you know of an innovative, small-scale, pilot project, ideally one run by disabled people themselves?

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Sweden's winter wonderland

Despite Hell freezing over, lost luggage and painful boots, **Ivy Broadhead** found that a weekend of skiing, skating and dog-sledding in Sweden was the perfect way to escape the stress of exams

When my dad pitched the idea of a March trip to Sweden to visit old friends, I jumped at the chance: snow, skiing, skating, and generally an escape from university deadlines and exam stress.

A few months later, I was beginning to question my wisdom. To briefly summarise the trauma of our journey to Sweden: a 4am start, only to be bumped off our flights at Schipol airport, followed by lost luggage and running through security to catch an entirely unnecessary flight to Oslo. We were finally reunited with our suitcases at Trondheim and rushed to Hell station to catch a train into Sweden, to find that not only had Hell frozen over, but it had done so without providing a waiting-room, and with over an hour's wait for the next (inaccessible) train. We arrived in Järpen, northern Sweden, tired, cold and fraught, but miraculously still complete with luggage. Having got off to such a bad start, the rest of the

weekend ran remarkably smoothly.

Since neither of us had so much as looked at a pair of skis before, on Saturday we decided to start out on familiar territory, with ice skating. But not just on a little indoor rink, you understand. During the cold winter months, many of Sweden's lakes

“Skating outside on a frozen lake is a very different beast from what's on offer in the UK”

freeze over completely, making them a playground for skating and other winter sports, so we headed to the Östersund Vinterpark to get our skates on. We weren't alone; the Swedes are an outdoorsy bunch it seems, and everyone was out enjoying the beautiful scenery. Men, women, children, older people taking it easy on kick-sledges, others on skates letting their dogs do the work, wheelchair-users, even tiny babies pulled along on

sledges or strapped to mums and dads.

Given my low centre of gravity, ice-skating has always come quite naturally to me, but skating outside on a frozen lake is a very different beast from what's on offer in the UK. For one, the skates were much more comfortable, although they did come with long, detachable blades that snapped onto the front of your skates, which took a little getting used to. We were also given ski poles, along with the skate hire, which turned out to be rather useful when it came to emergency stops. Rather than doing circuits of a rink, visitors were free to go as far as they wanted along the path that had been cleared through the snow, and seats were provided along the way for anyone who needed a rest. This was a real plus for me; given the glorious

Did you know?

Prehistoric carvings depicting people on skis have been found in Norway dating back to 5000BC.



TOMMY ANDERSSON

setting, it was easy to get a bit carried away and tire myself out skating off into the distance, forgetting that I'd have to come all the way back again.

Another day, another intrepid adventure: Sunday saw us off to Rödkullen ski resort in Åre, ready to give skiing a go. Boots presented a bit of a problem: like many people of restricted growth, my tiny feet aren't quite matched by the size of my legs,

something ski boots aren't made to accommodate. After many trials and tribulations, the guy assisting us managed to dismantle a pair and put them back together so that I could just about jam my feet into them. Now I'd been warned ski boots were uncomfortable, being made of hard plastic and designed to hold ankles rigid, but this was a world of pain I hadn't been expecting. So much so



TOM SHAKESPEARE

that I found it difficult to concentrate on listening to our friend Tina teaching us how to ski, so busy was I thinking about my poor mangled feet. Feet that really didn't want to do what they were told now they were strapped into skis. Improbably small children glided past me as I crashed into barriers and got more and more frustrated and uncomfortable, until I just had to give up and go for some lunch instead.

After a blissful lunchtime of liberation from my boots, I headed back out onto the slopes, this time with much more success. With only a morning's practice, I never made it off the baby slopes, but snow-plowed my way around quite contentedly once my feet were sufficiently numb. The slope I was on had conveyor-belt lifts, which were incredibly easy to use, but even once I worked up to button lifts there wasn't a problem: you grab onto a button, stick it behind your knees and let it pull you up the hill. My dad, who was infuriatingly proficient, informs me that the longer button-lifts took a bit more concentration to hold onto, and chair-lifts might have presented more of a challenge, but luckily I never got good enough to find out.

Although they weren't out on the slopes during our stay, there is an organisation that specialises in skiing for disabled people, which is also based in Rödkullen. Totalskidskolan (Total Ski School) was founded in 1987 by Anders Ohlsson, who was reluctant to give up skiing after breaking his back during military service, and instead worked to develop new equipment to make skiing accessible. I spoke to Nick Cutcliffe at the Total Ski School, who explained their inclusive policy: "We used to have a policy that skiers had to be able to breathe independently, but we've now scrapped even that, and I think we've now had four fully ventilated people →

Did you know?

Disabled skiing really started with veterans returning from WWII, and today disabled skiers from across the world compete in the annual IPC World Cup, the Disabled Alpine Skiing World Championships, and the Paralympic Winter Games.

out. There really is no limit."

With the aid of specialist equipment like sitskis and skicarts and experienced staff providing one-to-one instruction, the school caters for people with a variety of impairments. "For lots of our guests we use standard equipment, but maybe if they're visually-impaired or have a learning difficulty, they need an instructor with a bit more know-how," said Nick. And unlike most holiday companies, they hope their customers don't keep coming back. "Our aim is to get them as independent as possible. We want them to go on to ski elsewhere."

While the ski school wasn't open during our weekend in Sweden, we were able to try some dog-sledding, run by Anna at Adventure Booking, who also works with Totalskidskolan. After two days of skiing and skating, I was

ready to try something a bit less heavy-going, and sitting on a sledge letting someone else do the work sounded perfect. With me safely strapped into a sledge, two dogs (disappointingly not actual huskies) pulled me along at high speed, with Anna skiing alongside in case we got a little off course. Having accepted I was never going to reach any real velocity skiing, dog-sledding was a much easier and more comfortable way to experience a bit of a thrill.

I might never be a ski champion, but I'm certainly glad I gave it a go, and I can see how much fun it would be once you stop falling over and crashing into things all the time. Skiing can get pretty expensive, though, with having to pay for accommodation, travel, ski wear, ski hire, and ski pass. While this makes it less of a regular holiday option, it also increases the risk of spending a week

surrounded by braying English aristocrats, if you can forgive my inverted snobbery. In this respect, Sweden's a pretty good option, since most of the tourists seemed to be southern Swedes or Russians, most of whom spoke enough English to get by. And like most Scandinavian countries, Swedes are really into their sauna, the perfect relaxation after a day out on the slopes. In fact, with sledding, skating, sauna and snowy mountain views, the skiing was only part of the fun. ■

TRAVEL TIPS

Ostersund Vinterpark is a municipal park, so there is no entry fee, and from February to April the ice is stable enough to skate on. Skate hire costs 150kr (about £13) for one hour, or 200kr for a whole day. Visit www.turist.ostersund.se

Rödkullen alpine centre in Åre is open from December to May, and ski hire cost us 190kr for half a day's skiing, with free use of ski lifts, poles, helmets, etc.

Totalskidskolan is open Monday to Friday, December to April. Prices vary, but are subsidised by the organisation. Visit www.totalskidskolan.z-se

Adventure booking offers a range of activities, from dog-sledding to getting up close and personal with a moose. Visit www.adventurebooking.se



TOM SHAKESPEARE



TOTALSKIDSKOLAN



Sussex Health Care



Rapkyns Care Centre, Broadbridge Heath, West Sussex

Beech Lodge, Broadbridge Heath, West Sussex

Norfolk Lodge, Horsham, West Sussex

Redwood House, Broadbridge Heath, West Sussex



Sussex Health Care is an award winning group of care homes that were founded in 1985. Sussex Health Care now operate 15 care homes, predominantly in the West Sussex area, providing nearly 450 beds, incorporating specialist care provision as well as care for older people. Sussex Health Care currently have vacancies in two of our care homes:



Rapkyns Care Centre opened 2 new bungalows in January 2007. The home is based in Broadbridge Heath and caters for young people with complex and multiple needs. The home is comprised of three bungalows for ten people and one for eleven which are purpose built and fully accessible for wheelchairs. Each single room provides en-suite facilities and track hoisting is available throughout. There is one bed available for respite care. There is a day centre on site with swimming pool and IT suite. Physiotherapy and hydrotherapy are available to service users as is 24 hour nursing care. A Speech and Language Therapist is also employed.

Beech Lodge is a purpose built bungalow which provides two wings of 10 bedrooms all with en-suite facilities providing care for young adults with multiple and complex needs. The registered care home with nursing has been equipped with all the latest technological aids and provides a safe, comfortable, homely environment for our service users. Person centred planning is at the forefront of our philosophy with the service user's needs and wishes at the centre of our service. Our philosophy is to provide the very best care in a safe and comfortable environment whilst respecting service user's rights to live as normal a life as possible.

Sussex Health Care also currently have residential vacancies in two of our care homes:

Both **Norfolk Lodge** and **Redwood House** have been skilfully converted to accommodate 8 people in each home and offer a specialised residential environment for adults with learning disabilities who may also present with moderately challenging behaviour. Person centred planning is at the forefront of our philosophy with the service users needs and wishes at the centre of our service. Our philosophy is to provide the very best care in a safe and comfortable environment whilst respecting service user's rights to live as normal a life as possible.

In 2008 the group are developing 2 new purpose built facilities

Beechcroft Care Centre, West Hoathly Road, East Grinstead.

This service will provide 2 purpose built 10 bedded bungalows with track hoisting throughout and en-suite facilities to all rooms for people with physical and learning disabilities. The home will also have its own hydrotherapy pool and a separate swimming pool. Trained nurses, keyworkers and physiotherapists will be available over a 24 hour period. This service is due to open in May 2008.

Horncastle Care Centre, Plawhatch Lane, Sharpthorne, East Grinstead.

This service will provide a purpose built residential service with 24 hour nursing support for people with acquired brain injury and neurological conditions. This service is due to open in May 2008.

For further information

Please contact Corrine Wallace, Head of Specialist Care Services and Future Development,

Tel: (01403) 217338 • Fax: 01403 210424 • email: corrine.wallace@sussexhealthcare.org • web: www.sussexhealthcare.org



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE



Road to nowhere

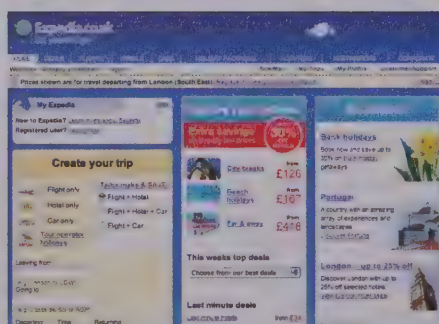
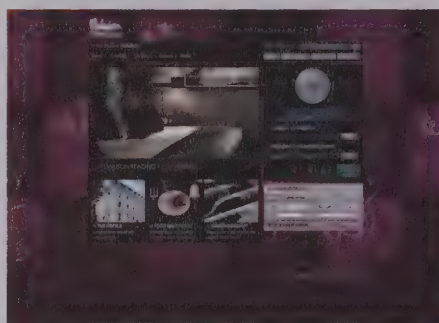


Information is the key to planning a dream holiday. But many travel websites are still failing disabled travellers, says accessibility expert **Julie Howell**

In *The Art of Travel*, popular philosopher Alain De Botton suggests that if you're really looking forward to a holiday it might actually be better to stay at home! He famously took a long-desired cruise only to stay aboard ship when it reached the destination for fear that the country he'd so longed to visit would disappoint him. De Botton believes that it's sometimes better to dream than to do!

At least he has the choice. For many disabled people, dreams of a romantic tour of the capital cities of Scandinavia, a safari tour of an African reserve or extreme sports in a remote part of Australia never progress beyond daydreams because every aspect of planning an exciting or leisurely holiday is hampered by lack of access to information.

Travel agents and tour operators have for years provided essential travel and holiday information through their websites. It's a quicker, cheaper way of communicating with customers en masse. In recent times they've moved things up a gear. Having realised that the holiday experience starts in the mind you can now find an incredible amount of information on the web to help you plan your dream holiday a long time in advance of booking it. A holiday is probably the most expensive gift you buy yourself each year. You want to know, well in advance of the



Basic errors: Malmaison and Expedia

trip, that every aspect will be accessible, effortless and enjoyable. After all, holidays are supposed to provide a break from the stresses of everyday life.

So you would expect that travel websites would be a huge boon for the disabled traveller.

I'm director of accessibility at web design agency Fortune Cookie. My colleague, Fortune Cookie accessibility specialist Rune Leth Andersen, and I decided to research the accessibility of eight of the most popular travel websites. What we found was very disappointing.

We looked at:

- **Hilton** (www.hilton.co.uk)
- **Malmaison** (www.malmaison.com)
- **Thomas Cook** (www.thomascook.com)
- **STA Travel** (www.statravel.co.uk)
- **Travel Supermarket** (www.travelsupermarket.com)
- **Expedia** (www.expedia.co.uk)
- **Cruise Critic** (www.cruisecritic.com)
- **Trip Advisor** (www.tripadvisor.co.uk)

Basic design errors made most of the sites difficult to use if you have impairments such as blindness or partial sight. Many contained rich, inspirational imagery that lacked any text description, leaving blind travellers with only bland, uninspiring information. Some sites have inaccessible booking processes, so even if you manage to choose a holiday your efforts to make a booking would be frustrated.

On some sites, text sizes and screen colours are fixed. This needlessly excludes colour-blind people from reading the screen.

The fact that travel companies have had a legal duty to make their sites accessible since 1999 seems to have had little impact. So what can we do to encourage travel agents and tour operators to do better? Well, that's simple. Tell them about the problem. Write to them. Email them (if you can find out a way to do that on an inaccessible site). Tell them about Abilitynet, the disability technology charity that has a website packed with useful information about accessible web design (www.abilitynet.org.uk).

Everyone deserve a stress-free holiday at least once a year. The web should make it even easier to make your dream a reality. If it doesn't, complain!

• **Julie Howell is director of accessibility at Fortune Cookie. Visit www.fortunecookie.co.uk or email julie.howell@fortunecookie.co.uk for more information**

Disability Awareness Day 2008

Promoting Independence throughout Life & Work

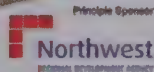
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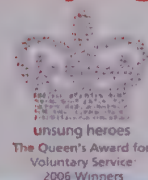
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Patsy Watson

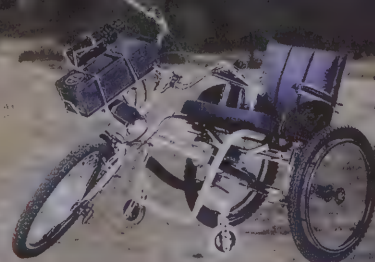
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Digital switch: the user's tale

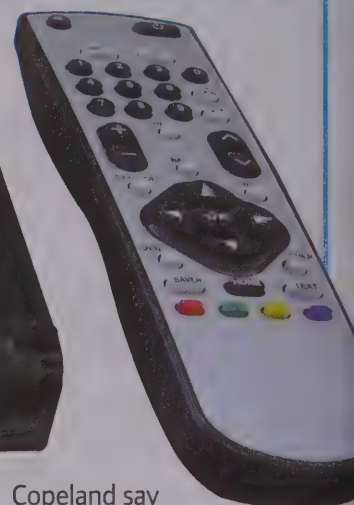
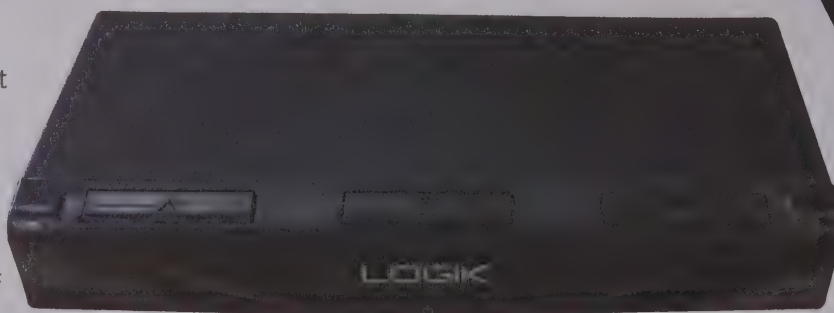
Following last month's article on the choices we face after analogue switch-off, **Ian Macrae** now looks at what lessons can be learned from the experience of disabled people in Whitehaven, which went digital last year

"We in Whitehaven were the guinea pigs. They say it went smoothly but I don't think it went as smoothly as they say it did."

That's the verdict of Anne Bradshaw, based on her own experience of digital switch-over and those of her fellow members of the Copeland Disability Forum of which she's chair. The first confusion was over the cost of switch-over for people who're entitled to help under the national help scheme for older and disabled people.

"One of the ladies from Digital UK came to talk to the forum. She told us everything was free. Well, it turns out it's not free. I had to pay £40 although I'm on the high rate of DLA and a full-time wheelchair-user."

The plain facts are that you are entitled to assistance from the help scheme if you're over 75 and/or disabled. In that case, you'll be given a Freeview box at a preferential rate which will



also cover the cost of installation and any training you need in using it. You're only entitled to the box for free if you are in receipt of an income-related benefit.

Jackie Burdon, the BBC spokeswoman for the help scheme, admits that in Whitehaven the messages were confused and confusing.

I had to re-scan for channels every time I switched the telly on. They changed the box and the same thing happened

"In Copeland we would acknowledge that we didn't communicate the £40 aspect early enough to people. As we go forward we'll concentrate on making sure

in each region that people know there's a £40 payment."

Other issues have arisen with the equipment given to people under the scheme in Whitehaven. The box chosen was the Logik LDR V3. It presented Anne Bradshaw and other members of the forum with some problems.

"I had to re-scan for channels every time I switched the telly on," she says. "I brought them back and they changed the box and the same thing happened. It's still not sorted out. I eventually bought flat-screen tellies with Freeview built into them."

Other people reported more general problems with reception. Of about 35 TV channels available on Freeview, viewers in

Copeland say they can receive roughly half, although they were able to pick up all the digital radio stations.

Jackie Burdon from the BBC told us that the Logik box probably won't be the one which people in other areas are given.

"There won't necessarily be one scheme box. As well as getting a box which is of good quality, it will be easy to access subtitles and audio description. We'll always make sure that the remote is easy to use for people with dexterity problems."

The next area to go totally digital is Selkirk and the Borders later this year. We'll want to be sure that lessons learned from Whitehaven dictate what happens there.

the new Ford Galaxy Liberty Range

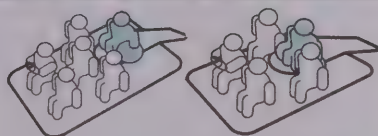
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roadtest



JAMIE TROUNCE

A fee too far



More and more local authorities are charging disabled people to park in their carparks, says **Helen Smith**

About a year ago, I wrote in *Disability Now* about the growing number of councils starting to charge blue badge-holders for parking in their carparks. A year on and it seems the trend has continued.

The Borough Council of

Kings Lynn and West Norfolk (BCKLWN) has now announced that it will no longer be providing free parking for blue badge-holders in their council-run carparks. Leader of the council, Nick Daubney, says: "This is because the council is committed to maintaining

council tax levels at or below the rate of inflation and we feel that those who use council carparks should have to pay."

However, disabled people who rely on their cars to get into the town are furious. Jonathan Toye, from the West Norfolk Disability Information Service, says: "This is yet another expense that disabled people will have to deal with. Many are on a low, fixed income and cannot use public transport because it is inaccessible. Using the car is their only choice."

Woking Council has also recently announced that it will be charging blue badge-holders to park in its carparks, although local residents will still be able to park for free. But while the residents of Woking may be happy, disabled drivers who live nearby will have to either pay £150 for a three-year season ticket or £1 an hour to park. Blue badge-holder Christine Batham, who lives just outside Woking, says that, because of the new £150 fee, she will no longer be able to visit Woking. She says: "In future I will have to find a new place to shop. I do fear losing contact with my friends."

There has been increasing pressure on councils to keep council tax bills low and it seems charging blue badge-holders is an easy way to make money.

BCKLWN claims that, by charging blue badge-holders to park, it expects to make an additional £240,000 a year, and I expect the carpark revenue in Woking will also increase.

BCKLWN has said that disabled people are no less

This is yet another expense that disabled people will have to deal with

able to pay than anyone else. What they've not taken into consideration is that disabled people often have no choice but to use their cars. Even if my local bus service ran accessible buses, I couldn't easily get to the bus stop to use them. I also can't carry my shopping far and I know that however quickly I race about doing my shopping I will still take considerably longer than a non-disabled person, so I would have to pay considerably more.

I contacted the Local Government Association (LGA) to find out what they thought about this issue. Unfortunately, their spokesperson said they didn't have a view on this. Although the association may not have a view, disabled people who are struggling to meet this additional cost of motoring most definitely do!



JAMIE TROUNCE

The agile Agila

Vauxhall's Agila is a handy runabout but not a shoutabout, says **Paul Carter**

Launched as a rival to Ford's now ubiquitous Ka, the Vauxhall Agila is a reworking of Suzuki's Wagon R and is aimed squarely at drivers in the market for a small, runaround vehicle.

In that regard, the Agila ticks most of the boxes.

It's certainly a solidly-built car and despite its size it has a sense of gravitas.

The Agila is deceptively roomy inside considering its external dimensions and affords plenty of legroom for both front and rear seat passengers, as well as ample storage space for a vehicle of its size.

Despite this, space would be tight if a wheelchair had to be carried regularly and there are better options (such as Vauxhall's own Corsa) if

this is a deal-breaker.

Ultimately, the Agila is very much an inner-city car, and this is evidenced when pushing it a little bit harder.

The engine becomes very noisy at higher revs and while it remains nippy and responsive at low speeds around town centre streets, it clearly shifts somewhat out of its comfort zone when asked for some extra pull.

Ride quality is firm but

not uncomfortable and it made light work of speed bumps and potholes while the steering was light and reactive without being overly twitchy.

Up front, the dash is a fairly standard Vauxhall affair with the main console dominated by the surprisingly impressive CD player, with its easily accessible controls.

There are very few other standard features to shout

about, though considering its position in the market, perhaps this isn't such a surprising revelation.

One startlingly obvious omission, however, was the lack of any central locking, something almost unheard of on modern cars. This led to a rather laborious "door test" each time the vehicle was parked after carrying more than one passenger. This may seem a trivial observation but could prove an irritation for those with mobility difficulties.

This sparsity of features and lack of performance at higher speeds does cause concern, especially as the Agila can only be described as "competitive" with similar cars in its class.

On the whole, though, the Agila is a perfectly acceptable small city car, which would suit those looking for a compact, but well built, runaround for short journeys.

If you regularly spread your wings further afield, it may not be the car for you.



The Vauxhall Agila is on the Motability scheme in engine sizes ranging from 1.0i to 1.3 but only the 1.2 is available with automatic transmission. No advance payment is needed for the base model but the 1.3 requires an advance of £699.

sportnow

by Paul Carter

Weir's golden treble

British athlete David Weir showed the rest of the world he is still the man to beat in the run-up to Beijing as he powered home in a sprint finish to take his third successive London Marathon victory.

In an eventful men's wheelchair race, Weir (*right and bottom right*) produced his now trademark explosive pace down the final stretch of The Mall to finish just four seconds ahead of last year's runner-up, Australian Kurt Fearnley, in a time of 1:33.56 (*pictured, bottom left*).

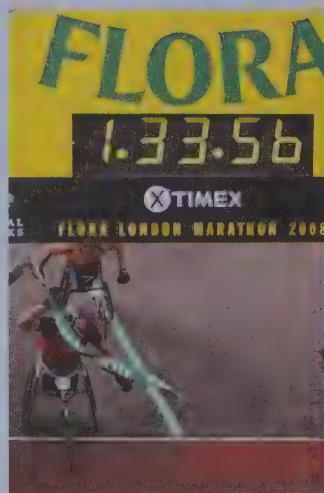
It was a particularly impressive performance from Fearnley, who overcame a crash with Japanese athlete Choke Yasuoka after just six miles, and later a puncture around the 12-mile mark.

There was further drama in the closing stages, as Ernst Van Dyk and Joshua George collided in the final 100m, resulting in the pair crashing into the spectator barriers, effectively ruining both racers' chances of a medal.

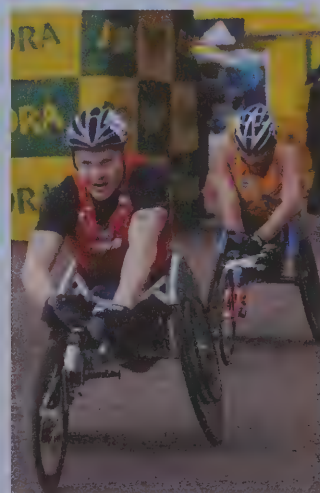
All in all, seven racers



MARK DAVIDSON



MARK DAVIDSON



MICHAEL PRESTON/CREATIVE19.COM

entered the closing stages with a chance of winning the race, making it one of the most closely-contested men's races for many years.

"It was a very good race, very tough," Weir told *Disability Now*. "The racers call me 'the hammer' now, because I was hammering along trying to break them. It was probably the

toughest race so far.

"The time wasn't so quick but I didn't have the best preparation leading up to this race. I think if I was more confident I would have led the race all the way."

On yet another close finish, the three-time champion said: "I prefer it like that because of my sprinting ability. Kurt did well. He crashed at six miles

but caught us back up, and he got a puncture as well. He's a strong character and one to watch at Beijing."

The women's race also had its fair share of incident, with Britain's Shelly Woods having to settle for third place after suffering a puncture just three miles into the race.

It was a bitter blow for the 21-year-old from Blackpool, who was widely tipped to add to her 2007 London crown.

She told us: "I kept going but I had to change my tyre and I just couldn't catch back up again. I left it as long as I could before I changed it.

"Every hill that you go up, it feels like you're pushing through sand! In the end I had to change it and I was just happy to get home."

Her misfortune cleared the way for the experienced Swiss racer Sandra Graf to take the title in a time of 1:48.04, ahead of the young American Amanda McGrory in 1:51.58.

Woods was philosophical about the way the race panned out.

"I'm not happy with my performance, but it was beyond my control. It happens."

Weir has sights set on Beijing gold

After the exertions of this year's London Marathon, David Weir told *Disability Now* he is firmly focusing on his first Paralympic gold medal.

Along with Shelly Woods, Weir will head to Portugal for a training camp, before returning home to Manchester next month at the Paralympic World Cup.

Weir was keeping his choice of events for Beijing close to his chest, but confirmed he would again race over 400 and 1500m in Manchester.

The four-time London Marathon winner was out of action for several months at the end of last year with glandular fever, and missed the World Championships in Osaka where he was due to compete in an exhibition 1500m.

He said: "Touch wood, the glandular fever has gone. I'm doing all the right things like vitamins, nutritionists, but it's just when I catch little colds and coughs they seem to linger for a long time and they run me down."

Despite the setback, he had ominous words for his rivals. "I'm not even up to my full training at the moment. Where I was training twice a day, six days a week, I was really super fit. But now I'm

just doing a couple of hours a day. I'm doing the quality, just not the quantity, but sometimes it does you good just to do the quality."

Weir, who won a bronze and a silver in Athens, said he hoped to go one better in Beijing and bring back a gold.

"I've not won a Paralympic gold so my aim is to come home with one. My aim is to come back with just one gold and anything else is just an added bonus."

Q&A: Sascha Kindred



In the fifth of our Paralympics profiles in the run-up to Beijing, we put our questions to swimmer Sascha Kindred

How did you first get involved in disability sport?

When I was about 11. My brother was a swimmer, and I just wanted to be a swimmer as well. I begged my mum, but she was reluctant because of my disability but

I kept hassling her, and in the end she took me to a club. It went from there.

What is your biggest sporting achievement so far?

Quite a few really, but the most favourable would have

to be the Sydney Paralympics, where I won two golds, a silver and a bronze.

What is your biggest disappointment in sport so far?

I'd probably say Atlanta. I went there ranked number one on paper, but only came back with a silver. It was my first Paralympics so I think I did quite well but at the time it was very disappointing.

What are your ambitions for Beijing and beyond?

To defend my 200m medley and 100m breast stroke titles. I'm calling it a double hatrick, because it will be my second games defending my two medals and my world record in the 200m individual medley.

Who are your sporting heroes?

I love watching sport. I

admired the skills of Eric Cantona when he was playing, Carl Lewis, Michael Johnson. I admire any athletes who are at the top of their game, in whatever sport.

Do you think the GB team is in good shape for the Beijing Games, and beyond that, London?

I can only speak for the swimming team because that's what I know, but it is in great shape. There are lots of promising youngsters coming through and things are looking good.

Who is your tip to be the next star of GB Paralympic sport?

There's a lad in my class called Matthew Whorwood, and also Louise Watkin who has been knocking massive times off her personal bests.

artsreview

WANTED! DISABLED SWINGERS

A disabled acrobat is hoping his volunteers will perform at the 2012 opening ceremony. **Kelly Mullan** reports

Jean-Marie Akkerman, founder of Cirque Nova, plans to train disabled volunteers for what he hopes will be a performance in the opening ceremony of the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic games.

The first ten recruits start training in trapeze, juggling and stilt-walking this month. Rookie performers will attend the circus school on Saturdays trying out various skills to find what suits them. By 2012, Jean-Marie (*right*) aims to have at least a 40-strong troupe from throughout the UK.

Impairment needn't be a barrier to learning circus skills. Adjustments can be made. Jean-Marie, the first disabled member in a family steeped in circus, undertook "severe training to a high level of skill" and achieved things he thought impossible at a circus school in Paris.

Born in a caravan in the Canary Islands, Jean-Marie says: "Circus is in my blood. As a boy, I was surrounded by lions, elephants and performing dogs." However, as a teenager he endured violent homophobia



Pyramid scheme: Jean-Marie Akkerman (*far right*) supports performers

intended "to make a man of me" and encountered prescriptive ideas about which body shapes could learn different skills; as a tall man he was apparently only qualified to be an animal tamer.

Pre-empting rejection, Jean-Marie left the family when he was diagnosed as HIV positive and given a year to live. He joined a circus school in Paris, where he met radically different attitudes: "I discovered no matter what your size – fat, tall or small – you can work with whatever body you have to create something beautiful." Jean-Marie has swung with this liberating idea and now adapts trapeze swings to enable wheelchair-

users to fly through the air upside down.

His mentor was the founder of the first circus school in western Europe, Annie Fratellini: "She was six years terminally ill with cancer and we had a competition of who would die first. Annie Fratellini allowed a new movement of contemporary circus to develop. Traditional circus is showmanship and entertainment; contemporary circus can be art with something to say."

Jean-Marie has used circus as a tool to promote HIV awareness and safe sex. Now

he uses it to say "disabled people have abilities". He first encountered the idea of HIV as disability when he approached the Terence Higgins Trust after being dismissed from a job because of his diagnosis. They helped him bring a discrimination case against his employer and win compensation. Realising he would not be accepted in society as an HIV positive person, he created his own company.

Jean-Marie is evangelical on the benefits of circus training: trapeze work strengthens muscles and promotes independence, working in a team boosts confidence, coming up with routines stimulates creativity, and vigorous exercise staves off depression. Jean-Marie's 2012 dreams for Cirque Nova are dependent on funding, but if you'd like to get involved, contact the school through www.cirquenova.com

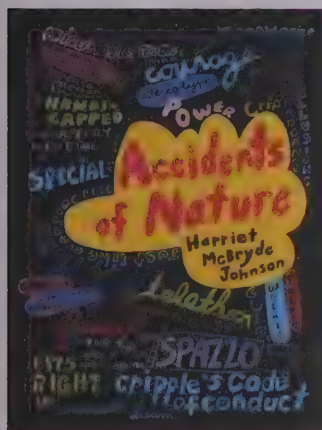
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BOOKS

Accidents of Nature



This is a new American book based on the disabled author's own experiences in her youth. It is a simple tale of friendship and "coming of age" set at a "crip camp" for disabled teenagers in the 1970s. What are not simple are the thoughts, ideas and views that are introduced to the protagonist and, in turn, us the readers.

That protagonist is Jean, a bright 17-year-old girl with cerebral palsy who lives her life "just like a normal girl" and who has had very limited contact with other disabled people. That is, until she meets Sara, a strong and feisty teenager with a strong dislike of the non-disabled authority that she finds herself subjected to (bet she is not the only one. Nah, I know she isn't).

The book is paced slowly, following the young ladies and a wonderfully interesting cast of other disabled kids

and the equally intriguing collection of adult counsellor staff through the ten days of camp. This allows for detailed journal-like descriptions of the week's itinerary and the changes in Jean. Considering that the author is herself like the character of Sara, even though it is written in the first person by Jean, what I found very interesting was the care taken to write about the cp movements that take over Jean's body. One of the important moments for me is when Jean is watching another cp body and thinking about herself; even I, who had considerably more exposure to disability in my formative years, can pinpoint the time that I felt what Jean feels.

This is a really interesting book if you are looking at it with a historical eye because, although the hot words "social model" and "medical model" never show up, the pure and simple idea of that concept runs as strongly through the book as Sara herself.

I enjoyed this book immensely, as did my non-disabled best friend. It would make brilliant reading for teenagers, disabled or not.

Katie Caryer

• *Accidents Of Nature* by Harriet McBryde Johnson; paperback; Andersen Press; £5.99

One in a Hundred



Aidan Shingler's latest book *One in a Hundred* will resonate immediately with all those who, like Shingler, are "survivors", not only of mental illness, but more importantly to him, of the current treatments imposed, sometimes forcibly, on those experiencing mental illness.

The title's premise is that "one person in every hundred is medically labelled schizophrenic". The one is represented as a butterfly; the remaining 99 as Rorschach's psychological inkblot tests. The argument of Shingler's book is that schizophrenia should more appropriately be termed "spiritual conflict" and psychotic should become "psychic". His fascination with the butterfly (a beautifully recurrent image in the book) is the dictionary definition of psyche, as meaning butterfly.

Those familiar with Shingler's previous publication, *Beyond Reason*, may be surprised to

find some of those images re-produced here.

However, in addition to some stunning new images, it seems to me that Shingler has now become a much more persuasive campaigner for the notion that schizophrenia should be seen as an enlightened or spiritual state, for which earlier artists such as William Blake or writers of the stature of Edgar Allan Poe were deemed visionaries.

Certainly the art work in this book, in the form of 45 full-colour images, is stunning in its own right. His composition, *Food for Thought*, comprised of a plate containing paper headlines, written instructions, a playing-card joker and metal wing-nuts, could easily be seen as a post-modernistic take on the classical format of "still lives".

This is a book that should be compulsory reading for non-disabled people whose opinions of schizophrenia may have been largely formed from scare stories in red-top tabloids.

Paddy Masfield

• To order a copy of *One in a Hundred* by Aidan Shingler, price £15, either quote ISBN number 978-0-9538821-1-3 to a bookstore, or visit www.oneinahundred.co.uk/shop – more on Aidan Shingler at www.disabilitynow.org.uk/arts

webwatch

Are you being surfed?

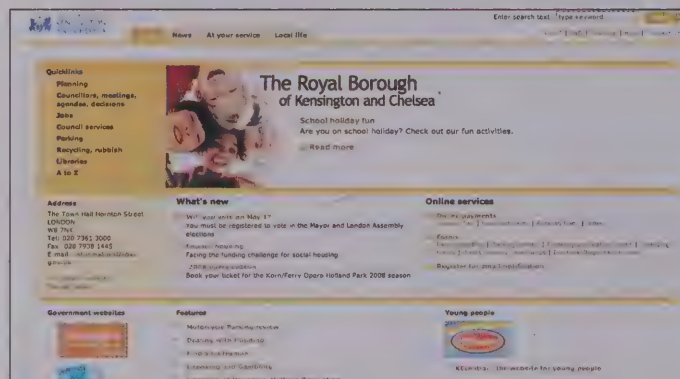
A new web access standard should make life easier for disabled surfers, but it could be 20 years before the internet is truly accessible. **Sunil Peck** reports

For all those disabled people who miss out on offers for cheap flights or groceries because of inaccessible websites, help could be at hand.

There is a whole range of problems that can make sites inaccessible: the failure to have text versions of audio content for users with hearing impairments; poor page layout, causing navigation problems for people with learning difficulties; and users who can't activate links because they don't use a mouse.

And these kind of web access problems are not confined to the leisure and retail sectors. A 2008 survey by Socitm, an association for IT professionals in local government, found that only 37 out of 468 local authority websites met the basic accessibility standards drawn up by the World Wide Web Consortium's web accessibility initiative (WAI) in 1999.

Now BSI British Standards, which works with industry, consumers and the government to promote best practice, is developing



Crowning glory: the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea website was one of the few to come out of the Socitm survey with flying colours

a new national standard for website developers which it hopes will lead to a more inclusive web.

The current guidelines of the WAI were drawn up years before the growth of social networking and e-commerce sites, which often rely on sophisticated multimedia technology that disabled users can struggle with.

The new standard will build on guidance drawn up in 2006 by the BSI and the Disability Rights Commission, known as PAS 78.

The chair of the committee drawing up the new standard is Julie Howell, the web accessibility campaigner. She says standardisation will

mean access is at the forefront of a developer's mind during the design and construction of a website.

"There is a lot that we want to tell web developers and commissioners about commissioning the appropriate web designers, how to involve disabled people in the user-testing process and all the elements to consider when producing a website," she says.

The new standard will also help developers unsure of which of the

various sets of guidelines they should follow.

But the standard will not be mandatory, so what incentive will there be for web developers to adopt it?

The main incentive will be financial, with businesses potentially able to reach millions of disabled consumers, but Howell says they will need to market the standard once it is published.

"A frustration of mine with PAS 78 was that it was published and there was not very much effort to raise awareness of it," she says. "I hope we will not make that mistake this time."

The new standard is due to be published in the first quarter of 2009. Howell insists that it will not become outdated, because BSI can update standards after they are published.

Awareness of access needs will become more important as the population ages and people develop impairments that impact on their ability to use the web. But she says it could be 20 years before web developers include disabled people as a matter of course and the internet is truly accessible.

→ Have your say

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Strife on the ocean waves

Paul Carter samples maritime access 1860s style and is given a terrifying glimpse into the past and the future

I would never have made it as a sailor. I know that's a bit of a random conclusion to draw, seemingly out of nowhere. After all, there are lots of olde worlde occupations I probably wouldn't have been any good at. Farrier (too horsey), barber (too hairy), blacksmith (too anvilly). I'd have been rubbish at those. And they sound like a lot of effort. I might have made a good chimney sweep or a pirate, though. Anyway, I digress.

I came to this negative nautical conclusion as I stood on the deck of HMS Warrior in Portsmouth, where I was best man at a wedding. No, I didn't know you could get married on massively armed warships either, but I quite like the symbolism.

Anyway, at risk of sounding like an unspeakably dull tour guide, the Warrior was (apparently) the first iron-hulled, armour-plated warship ever built. As you can imagine, iron-hulled, armour-plated warship designers probably weren't expecting too many wobbly people like me to be



SIMON WEBSTER/REX FEATURES

clomping all around their decks and huge cannons (fnar). Not unless they were jolly on grog, anyhow.

I realised that this was unlikely to have been my ideal working environment roughly six seconds after climbing a ramp of Himalayan proportions purely to get on board, when I had the unenviable opportunity of tackling some naval stairs.

Now, I wasn't aware of there being many technological advances in staircase design over the past 150 years, but I was clearly wrong, as in 1860 they seemed to have a different idea about stairs.

I like to think that I can

handle most stairs reasonably well. However, I do tend to struggle a bit when the stairs in question are actually little more than a 15 foot drop accessible only by scaling what

Armour-plated warship designers probably weren't expecting too many wobbly people like me to be clomping all around their decks

resembles an angled ladder with the rungs about three feet apart and only a rope as a handrail. A rope! Who thought that up? "I know, if

I slip on this step (they were at sea remember) this haggard, mottled bit of old string will surely prevent me from plummeting to my death!" (OK, so maybe plummeting to their death is a bit of an exaggeration, but still, it probably would have caused a broken head or a graze or something.)

It was all OK in the end, though. One of these sets of stairs had at some point had a stairlift installed so the mobility incompetent like me could get downstairs, or whatever it's called on boats. I'd never used a stairlift before, and hadn't planned on using one for at least another 50 years, so if I gained one thing from my visit to the Warrior, it's that I had a terrifying vision of what the future holds for me. A very slow, terrifying vision.

I can't complain too much, though. I made it to the wedding on time, and even managed to make the thankfully short distance from my chair to the table without dropping the rings and making an utter plank of myself. It's a good job I was wearing my sea legs that day.

worklife



Carry on, doctor

Amit Shah is a junior doctor at Leicester Medical School

In my final year of medical school I had my third relapse of Hodgkin's lymphoma, this time with an autoimmune attack against my cerebellum. This left me with an array of impairments of varying severity, such as slurred speech, a lack of control over co-ordination and balance, fine dexterity difficulties and tremors.

My case was referred to the medical school's fitness to practice committee, which had to decide if these impairments would stop me performing as a doctor. I worked twice as hard to prove that I would be an asset to the medical profession, and despite the uncertainty and negativity

from some staff members, I was relieved to find that the medical school had a legal obligation under the Disability Discrimination Act to make reasonable adjustments so that I could fulfil my role as a doctor.

I qualified as a doctor last August and have successfully completed rotations (temporary secondments) in breast surgery and psychiatry.

I felt it was important to be upfront and honest with my supervising consultant and colleagues so they could support and understand me when I did things differently, instead of making false assumptions. I also chose specialities that would allow me to adjust

more easily to clinical work.

An occupational health consultant makes sure I am coping both physically and mentally. I also have the option of tailoring my training so that I can find my place in medicine at my own pace. Fortunately, I have not come across any major obstacles and my colleagues have been very sympathetic and encouraging. More importantly, I haven't had any complaints from patients. Indeed, I feel that, having been one myself, I have a better understanding and relationship with my patients.

I am currently waiting for specialist equipment after being assessed by the government's Access to Work scheme. It has not been easy to find someone in the hospital to order and buy the equipment, though, and seven months into my training I am still waiting.

Being honest about my impairments has enabled me to focus my training on developing my strengths. I need to find a compromise between what I dreamed of doing and what I can

actually do, and choose a speciality that will highlight my strengths and not my impairments.

Looking back, medical school is not the hardest part of becoming a doctor when you have disabilities. Whatever arrangements have been made at school or college can also be made at university.

There is also a greater awareness of the needs of disabled medical students, as shown by the General Medical Council's new guidance for medical schools*, but you should make sure you are being fully supported and arrangements are made in advance for assessments and adjustments.

People have greater rights in today's society so if you are determined to stand up for what you want and believe in, then becoming a doctor can be a reality.

***Advising medical schools: encouraging disabled students; www.gmc-uk.org/education/undergraduate/undergraduate_policy/gat_aways_guidance/index.asp**

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- 2000: entry to Leicester Medical School
- 2007: Graduated from Leicester Medical School with honours and distinction in both the written paper

- and clinical exam
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Vacancies for three Council members will arise on 1 September 2008. One of the vacancies is for a non-lay member and the other two are for lay members.

The people

For all posts, you must be able to demonstrate a sound record of achievement at a senior level.

For the non-lay member post, you must be a registered social worker with an academic background.

For one of the lay member posts we are looking for someone with substantial experience of ethnic minority issues and for the other lay member post we are looking for a user of social care services.

All members must be skilled communicators and strategic thinkers with the ability to contribute effectively at board level.

Applications from women, members of the black and minority ethnic communities and disabled people are particularly welcomed.

The role

As a member of the Council, you will work alongside other Council members and the executive team to contribute to the GSCC's objectives. You will use your skills and experience to challenge and discuss ideas effectively.

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Members will be required to devote two to three days a month to Council duties. Meetings are usually held at the Council's London offices. Members are entitled to remuneration of £7,598 pa plus allowances for necessary travel and subsistence.

The appointments will be for up to 4 years in the first instance. A further term will be considered, subject to satisfactory performance and the needs of the Council.

How to apply

If you think you have the qualities we require and want to apply for a post please call 0870 240 3802 during office hours or go to www.appointments.org.uk, quoting reference DH8022, for an information pack and application form (which are also available, on request, in large type, Braille or on tape)

The closing date for returning applications is 12 May 2008.

Interviews will take place in London on Thursday, 3 July and possibly Friday, 4 July.

The Appointments Commission is committed to equality of opportunity for all and the principle of appointment based on merit following an open and transparent process and independent assessment.

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See www.sector1.net for more public appointments being filled by the Appointments Commission.



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DFID is an equal opportunities employer. Applications are welcomed from all parts of the community and we actively encourage interest from women, ethnic minority groups and those with a disability. Selection is on merit. Candidates should be UK Nationals, nationals of a member state of the European Economic Area (EEA) or Commonwealth citizens with the right to work in the UK.

You can find out more about us, and our work, on our website www.dfid.gov.uk. You'll also find information about specific vacancies, opportunities, and an electronic application on the site.



DFID

Department for
International
Development

www.dfid.gov.uk

DEADLINE - Disability Now

June published 24 May. Classified deadlines:

Booking: 2 May. Copy: 7 May.

RECRUITMENT



Remploy Chief Executive

Remploy is entering an exciting phase in its development. Over the next 5 years it will quadruple to 20,000 per year the number of disabled people it supports into work through its employment service business. It also has exciting business development plans within its manufacturing and service businesses, which act as exemplars of the success of disabled employees. With over 4,000 employees and 100 planned sites, Remploy is the UK's leading provider of employment services for disabled people and people with health conditions. Remploy is a Non-Departmental Public Body sponsored by the Department for Work and Pensions and the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions is looking to appoint a new Chief Executive to lead the organisation.

The key challenges are:

- Implementation of the Modernisation Plan approved by the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions in November 2007.
- Developing and promoting Remploy's corporate identity and achievements to all stakeholders creating a positive view of Remploy.
- Continuing the development of a culture that delivers business results and values the contribution of its people.
- Working with the public sector to realise opportunities for both parts of the business.
- Leading the development of a productive relationship with the trade unions.

To be successful the person must have:

- Successful track record of being a CEO or business unit director of a large, successful, profit orientated business, preferably in manufacturing and service businesses.
- Ability to demonstrate success of growing a business through relationship management.
- Knowledge of or a desire to learn about employment issues affecting disabled people.
- Experience of managing organisational change and growth.
- Experience of developing productive union relationships.
- Track record of working with Government and organisations at a senior level.
- Experience of handling media.

For an electronic copy of the information pack giving further information and how to apply, please go to www.egonzehnder.com/appointments or call Alison Beckett on 020 7943 4876. Please let us know if you would like the application materials in an alternative format.

The closing date for applications for this post is 6pm on Friday 23 May 2008. Late applications will not be accepted.

Applications are particularly welcomed from people with disabilities, members of ethnic minority groups and women.

Remploy is an Equal Opportunities Employer.

DWP Department for
Work and Pensions

Remploy

Blue Eyed Soul Dance Company

Seeks a **Company Manager**

(Specialising in marketing)



Blue Eyed Soul Dance Company is seeking to appoint a Company Manager to join its staff team responsible for maintaining its current high standing and maximising its future potential.

The Company Manager is a new post; the Manager will work along side the Artistic Director, Education & Training Coordinator and Management Board to develop aspects of the organisations infrastructure and artistic programme with a focus on marketing the Company and its work.

35 hours per week, £26 K pro rata.

Application deadline: 1st May 2008. Interviews: 12th May 2008

Full details available from www.blueeyedsouldance.com or admin@blueeyedsouldance.com or **01743 210830**

Blue Eyed Soul is committed to Equal Opportunities and welcomes applications from all sections of the community



CARS/VANS/CARAVANS

FIAT DOBLO DYNAMIC 2007, only 1,353 miles on the clock, manual 5 speed gears, 1368 cc, petrol, pas, remainder of 3 year manufacturer's warranty remaining. Adapted for wheelchair use with internally mounted fold down ramp, four point wheelchair restraint system, electric winch, wheelchair occupant seat belt, blue /silver exterior, CD player. Excellent condition, unused by current owner. £8,500. For further info, tel Mr Quinn: **01489 781373** (Southampton) or **07962 972277**.

CHAIRMAN RENAULT KANGOO 1.2 petrol, white, Gowrings conversion with rear access for wheelchair. Carries wheelchair user plus 3 other seats. First registered

7/12/99 (V reg), only 64k miles, Good condition for the year, MOT until Oct 08. £3,000. Tel Phillip or Lynda: **01243 542189** (West Sussex) or email phillip.henke@btinternet.com

RENAULT KANGOO AUTHENTIQUE 1.4 petrol, auto, silver, 26,500 miles, sliding doors to allow good access to rear passenger, first registered in 2002, MOT expires May 21st 2008. Wheelchair conversion by Gleneagles Conversions Ltd, Perthshire. In immaculate condition, £6,000, selling due to bereavement. If you have any questions or would like to view the car in the Glasgow area, tel Ann: **07949 165771** or **0141 5860288** or email: mcloskeya@ntlworld.com

Cont'd see pg 77

RECRUITMENT



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Worthwhile work.

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BARKING RIVERSIDE

a new dawn for London living

Seeks an Independent Chair of the Barking Riverside Access Forum

(£400 per day, maximum of 2 days per month)

The developer, Barking Riverside Ltd (BRL) seeks to appoint an independent chairperson to its Access Forum.

The Role

- The Chair has a key role in ensuring that the Barking Riverside Access Forum (BRAf) carries out its work effectively to support Barking Riverside Ltd deliver its ambitious and exciting agenda for inclusive design.
- The Chair will ensure that BRAf members work successfully to give their feedback on access issues to the design teams developing detailed design proposals for submission to the local planning authority.
- The Chair will act as an ambassador for the Access Forum, increasing awareness of the Forum, promoting

its values and activities across BRL. He/she will provide strategic leadership to the Access Forum.

- There is a 12 month appointment, renewed annually.

The Candidate

- A Personal or direct experience of disability.
- An understanding of design and planning processes.
- A commitment to inclusive design working to improve the life chances of disabled people.
- Willingness to speak your mind and provide leadership.

Apply with a curriculum vitae (CV), closing date **Monday 26th May 2008.**

For more information please visit www.proudlockassociates.com/barking.htm or email tracey@proudlockassociates.com or call Tracey Proudlock, Proudlock Associates, 0845 130 1669.

Barking Riverside, situated between the A13 and the River Thames is one of the largest brownfield development sites in London. It provides the greatest of opportunities to create fully inclusive communities for up to 10,800 households, schools, leisure and cultural facilities and new transport links. Over the next 15-20 years **Barking Riverside** will become home to a new East London community of around 26,000.

EX-MOTABILITY RENAULT

Kangoo Expression Autograph 1.6, auto, March 07, 1 owner, 10,600 miles, air con, metallic blue. Wheelchair Conversion by Allied Vehicles including lowered rear floor and easy to manage ramp with electric remote winch. Cost new £14,900, asking £9,500 ono. Tel: **020 8841 0395** (Hayes, Middlesex) or mobile: **07771 667777**.

VW CARAVELLE VARIANT 2.8

V6, 2002 (02 reg), 65k miles, auto, metallic light blue, pas, e/windows and e/mirrors, sunroof, air con, alloy wheels. Brotherwood Conversion with rear ramp and electric winch, carries 6 including wheelchair. Fsh and regularly serviced, MOT expires March 09, only one owner from new, £5,250 ono, will deliver locally. Tel: **01202 633516** (Dorset), mobile: **07779 880744** or email: **i.cooke@poole.gov.uk**

CHAIRMAN RENAULT KANGOO

1.6 14v, metallic silver, auto, registered 2003 (53 plate), pas, e/windows and e/mirrors, CD player. Gowings conversion with lowered floor and folding rear ramp. 23k miles, only 2 owners from new, fsh and original manuals, MOT August 2008. In excellent condition, £7,250 ono. Tel: **01633 615383** (Risca. S.Wales), mobile: **07956 119000** or email: **coo419@aol.com**

RENAULT KANGOO 1.4

midnight blue, X reg (Nov 2000). Wheelchair conversion by Heeroma (full details available), carries 4 including wheelchair. MOT until August end, only 30k miles, regularly serviced and in good condition. £3,250 ono. Tel: **020 8681 3734** (Croydon) or mobile: **07724 766558**.

CITROEN BERLINGO

MULTISPACE Forte 1.6, registered Nov 01 (51 plate), 56k miles, rainforest green metallic, air con, e/windows, cassette, radio and 5 stack CD changer, ABS brakes. Full Brotherwood Lowered Floor Conversion with standard one-piece counter-balanced rear ramp. Rear seats either side of wheelchair. Only one owner from new, regularly serviced, with next service due in August. £4,500 ono. Mobile: **07974 755624** (Stratford-upon-Avon) or email: **georgeisaac@fmail.net**

RECRUITMENT

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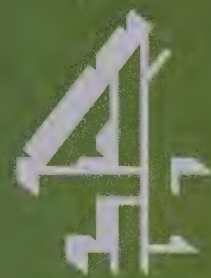
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TOYOTA ESTIMA WELLCAB 2.4

2001, 74k kilometres, silver, alloy wheels, air con, CD player, reversing camera, pas, e/windows and e/mirrors. 7 seater incl one wheelchair, inertia belts provided.

Factory built Toyota with 2 front seats, 2 in the middle and 3 in the back. Middle seat electronically moves out of car and lifts passenger back in. Year's full MOT, only one owner from new, £9,995. Tel: **07920 475575** (Southampton).

CITROEN BERLINGO 1.4

2001 (X reg), CD player, pas, Poseidon Blue Metallic. With wheelchair conversion incl tailgate, carries 4 including wheelchair. Only 22k miles, full MOT until Jan 2009 and one owner from new, fsh, asking £4,000 ono. Tel: **01530 457091** (Leics) or email: **rocketron39@ntlworld.com**

CITROEN DISPATCH 1.9D

Y reg. 81k miles. Gowings wheelchair conversion. Rear ramp. Inertia belts. Winch. Carries 5 including wheelchair. MOT June 08. Excellent condition. Home demonstration can be arranged. £4,300 ono. Tel: **0191 265 7916** (Newcastle-upon-Tyne).

FORD COURIER VAN 1.3

wheelchair adapted, 4 seats + wheelchair, 1996, new engine in 2004, winch, power steering, Constables Conversion, 96,000 miles, blue, £1,600. Tel: **01825 762294** (East Sussex), **patriciabentley@btinternet.com**

Cont'd see pg 78

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VW T5 SHUTTLE 2.5SE 174Tdi PD SWB wheelchair accessible vehicle, March 2007 (07 reg). 6 speed manual; shadow blue metallic; FVWSH; 13,750 miles; 2 years' VW warranty remaining. Very spacious and economical people carrier. Call or e-mail for full details. £23,950 ono. Tel: 01256 760930 (Basingstoke) or mobile: 07850 114288 or e-mail: charlesjames@techtalk.fsnet.co.uk

MERCEDES V230 AMBIENTE Metallic Black with tinted windows. 1998 Automatic, 58,000 miles. Takes all types of wheelchairs including Balder power chair. CD player, aircon, cruise control, ramp with winch, fridge and table (removable). Regularly serviced and very good condition. Price £5500 ono. Contact 07940 494834 or 0208 455 1958.

FORD FOCUS ZETEC 1.6 2005 (55 reg), jeans blue, air con, e/windows and e/mirrors, CD

player, pas. Constables Carchair Conversion for front passenger incl electric wheelchair. Carries 4 incl driver, only one owner from new, fsh, 25k miles, Ford Protect 3 guarantee. £12,500 ono. Tel: 07885 893757 (Stafford).

WHEELCHAIRS/SCOOTERS

INVACARE STORM 3 powered wheelchair. About four years old in excellent condition. Joystick control, hydraulic lift and tilt system and solid puncture-proof tyres. Complete with hydraulic footplates with straps, calf support, headrest and charger. £1250 ono. South West area – could deliver depending on distance. Tel Tricia Bright: 01258 472837 or e-mail brightle@globalnet.co.uk

POWERTEC 50 ELECTRIC 4-wheeled wheelchair, red and black, variable speed settings, max range on full charge 20 miles, carries 20 stones and horn. Bought new from factory for £5,500 18 months ago.

In very good order. Unique chair which splits down the middle and divides into 8 sections allowing easy stowage. Will deliver locally. £2,100 ono. Tel: 01483 457428 (Guildford) or 07775 885268 or email: machin_a@sky.com

PRIDE QUANTUM 600 powerchair for sale. Powered tilt, manual reclining 19x19 inch Euro Comfort seat; central footboard, also swing-away footrests; removable headrest; right-hand swing-away VSI controller; 2-motor mid-wheel drive, Pride 'Active-Trac' suspension – great on uneven ground/over obstacles; ideal for indoor/outdoor use; seat belt; easy front access batteries; automatic 8 amp off-board charger. 2 years old – only used for short period so EXCELLENT CONDITION (cost £4,244 new) £2,100 o.n.o. Tel: 01206 514749 (Colchester, Essex) buyer to collect; email: allison.wade@ntlworld.com

PDQ POWER TRIKE with 2 batteries, black and grey, detachable power pack. 4 years' old with all relevant paperwork. Only used once. Variable speed limit to a maximum of 15 mph. In excellent condition, £1,500 ono. Tel: 02392 645077 (Portsmouth).

LEVO STAND UP Wheelchair. £4,000ono, hardly used, power or manual combined chair provides mobility and easily lifts you into a standing position. This combination Power & Manual option would cost £8,000 plus. 16in seat width. Easily reverts to Power or Manual by turning wheel lock. £4,000 or nearest offer. Tel: 0208 205 6301 (NW London) or email tsteph@btinternet.com

SPECTRE PLUS RISER wheelchair, Blue, with all extras including attendant control, Leg riser, Seat riser, Kerb climber, Back recliner, Comfort seat cost over £5000, little used and includes charger. Bargain at £650. Tel 0114 232 6138.

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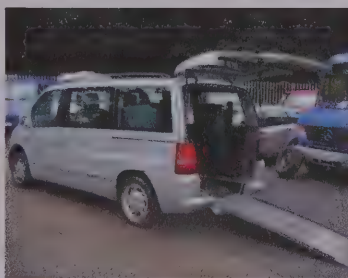


53 Citroen Berlingo Brotherwood 1.6 ltr petrol (J7727), Silver, 67,000 miles, 4 seats, Lowered rear floor, **£6,995**

51 Fiat Scudo Combi Montana 2.0JTD (J7785), Silver, 31,000 miles, 4 seats, Lowered rear floor, **£5,995**

55 Kia Sedona 2.9 crd SE wheelchair car (J7860), Metallic blue, manual, 23,226 miles, 4 seats, Full lowered floor; conversion, **£15,995**

51 Volkswagen Caravelle SWB 2.5TDi (J7669), Raven Blue, 67,000 miles, disabled driver adapted, **£8,750**



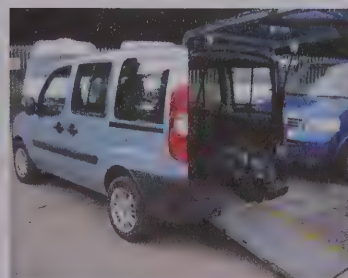
05 Renault Kangoo Brotherwood 1.6 ltr Petrol (J7802), 7,500 miles, 3 seats, Lowered floor, **£10,995**

04 Renault Kangoo 1.6 ltr Petrol (J7648), auto, silver, 7,000 miles, alloy wheels, ABS, **£9,249**

03 Doblo Aspen 1.9 Diesel (J7448), 16,000 miles, Low floor, Lightweight ramp, **£8,995**

54 Scudo Montana 2.0 Turbo Diesel (J7267), 20,000 miles, Low floor, Lightweight ramp, **£12,250**

53 Mercedes V-Class SWB 220 CDI (J7420), 27,000 miles, Auto, Low floor, Lightweight ramp, **£14,995**



02 Citroen Dispatch Window 1.9D (J73765), Lowered floor/ramp, lowering rear suspension, 38,379 miles, red, **£6,995**

01 Renault Kangoo 1.4 ltr Petrol (J7518), 48,000 miles, Low floor, lightweight ramp, **£5,250**

03 Renault Master SWB 2.5 DCI (J7203), 48,000 miles, 2 wheelchair spaces, lightweight ramp, **£9,995**

02 Volkswagen Transporter 1.9TDI (J7165), 70,000 miles, Ricon electric lift, 4 seats, **£7,995**



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Tel: Devon ASBAH on **01803 522256**. Web: **www.dasbah.co.uk**

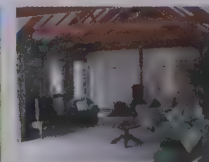
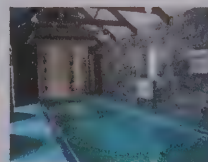
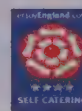
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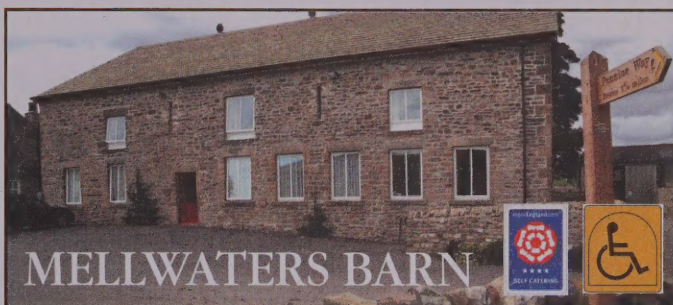
The Health Design & Technology Institute at Coventry University brings together educational expertise in health and social care and pioneering research to deliver two new courses from the Department of Occupational Therapy. These blended learning courses are designed to provide those working in the field with an improved knowledge and understanding of assistive technologies, focussing on the service user's perspective and experience of living with disability.

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With most copies of this issue of *Disability Now* there's a quiz that will help you find out how independently you live.

Produced by Scope in association with *Disability Now*, the quiz will help us to produce a snapshot of the lives of disabled people in Britain today. This information will be used in the battle to make things better, for more rights, for more choices, for greater equality and for an end to discrimination.

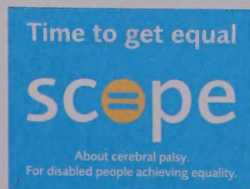
PLUS the chance to WIN: DVD players, DAB radios and subscriptions to *Disability Now*



When you send back your quiz, complete with your name and address, it will automatically be entered in our fabulous prize draw

Don't throw away this great opportunity

To complete the quiz online go to www.scope.org.uk or link through from our website www.disabilitynow.org.uk



(alternative formats, text and voice phone options also available)



**'For me,
independent
living is
being like any
other mum.'**

Kate, 29



Library photo posed by models. Picture: www.JohnBirdsall.co.uk

People like Kate need choice and control over any support they might need to look after their children.

We want to support disabled people to achieve their ambition of independent living. In early 2008 we release our new cross-government five year strategy. It sets out how the Government will:

- deliver real choice and control for disabled people
- ensure greater access to housing, health, education and training, employment, transport and mobility opportunities and participation in community and family life.

Find out more, visit www.officefordisability.gov.uk/independent

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Mr. & Mrs. H - Bolton

'From order to delivery Lewis Reed have been exceptional, and It goes without saying the Shuttle is excellent and we are over the moon with it'.

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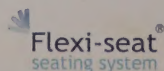
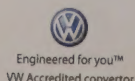
Better for You



'Our designers have produced a range of vehicles that look good, give great access and are easy to use. Customer care is now industry leading, as our customers often tell us. You choose from our extensive range and let us and our vehicles take care of you'.

**Peter Scullion,
Managing Director**

*Calls from UK landlines are free of charge, calls from mobile networks may incur additional charges, please check with your telephone provider for details



Motability

